unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

v91

Copyrights & Licensing

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

Copyright © 2022 by unfoldingWord

This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

unfoldingWord® is a registered trademark of unfoldingWord. Use of the unfoldingWord name or logo requires the written permission of unfoldingWord. Under the terms of the CC BY-SA license, you may copy and redistribute this unmodified work as long as you keep the unfoldingWord® trademark intact. If you modify a copy or translate this work, thereby creating a derivative work, you must remove the unfoldingWord® trademark.

On the derivative work, you must indicate what changes you have made and attribute the work as follows: “The original work by unfoldingWord is available from unfoldingword.org/ust”. You must also make your derivative work available under the same license (CC BY-SA).

If you would like to notify unfoldingWord regarding your translation of this work, please contact us at unfoldingword.org/contact/.

The unfoldingWord® Simplified Text is based on *A Translation For Translators* by Ellis W. Deibler, Jr., which is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://git.door43.org/Door43/T4T).

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text
Date: 2026-09-26
Version: v91
Published by: unfoldingWord®

Table of Contents

Genesis **5**
Exodus **134**
Leviticus **213**
Deuteronomy **289**
Joshua **360**
Judges **412**
Ruth **469**
1 Samuel **476**
2 Samuel **551**
1 Kings **612**
2 Kings **675**
Ezra **735**
Nehemiah **758**
Esther **792**
Job **808**
Psalms **898**
Proverbs **1113**
Song of Songs **1182**
Lamentations **1200**
Daniel **1225**
Hosea **1256**
Joel **1282**
Amos **1291**
Obadiah **1312**
Jonah **1315**
Micah **1320**
Nahum **1335**
Habakkuk **1342**
Zephaniah **1349**
Haggai **1358**

Zechariah **1362**
Malachi **1382**
Matthew **1387**
Mark **1467**
Luke **1518**
John **1592**
Acts **1647**
Romans **1727**
1 Corinthians **1760**
2 Corinthians **1794**
Galatians **1815**
Ephesians **1828**
Philippians **1840**
Colossians **1848**
1 Thessalonians **1856**
2 Thessalonians **1863**
1 Timothy **1868**
2 Timothy **1878**
Titus **1885**
Philemon **1889**
Hebrews **1891**
James **1918**
1 Peter **1927**
2 Peter **1936**
1 John **1942**
2 John **1951**
3 John **1953**
Jude **1955**
Revelation **1958**

Genesis

How God Created the Universe and Everything in It

1:1-2:3

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

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

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

11 Then God said, "I command the land to produce green plants all over the earth, including all types of plants that produce seeds and all types of fruit trees that produce their own

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

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

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

24 Then God said, "I command the land to produce all types of animals, each having its own type of young, including domestic animals, all types of animals that crawl and all the other types of wild animals, each having its own type of young." And that is exactly what happened. 25 That is how God made all the different types of wild animals, each having its own type of young, and all the domestic animals, each having its own type of young, and all different types of animals that crawl on the ground, each having its own type of young. God observed that what he had made was excellent.

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

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

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

2 **1** That is how God finished creating the heavens and the earth, including all the many things that are in them. **2** By the seventh day he had finished the work he had been doing, so he rested on that day from all that work. **3** Then God established the seventh day as a day to

bless people, by setting it apart as a special time to rest and worship him. He did that because on that day he no longer did the work that he had been doing, creating everything.

How Yahweh Created the First Man and First Woman

2:4-25

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

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

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

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

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

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

> “Finally! Here is someone **like me**
> who has bones and flesh from me!
> I will call her ‘woman,’
> because **it was** from **the body of** a man **that God** took her.”

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

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

Adam and Eve Sin against Yahweh, and He Judges Them

3:1-24

3 **1** Now the snake was the craftiest of all the animals that Yahweh God had created. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really command you not to eat fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" **2** The woman answered him, "No, God said that we may eat fruit from any of the trees in the garden, **3** except fruit from the tree that is in the center of the garden. He commanded us not to eat that fruit or even touch it, because if we do, we will die!" **4** But the snake said to the woman, "That is not true. You will not die. **5** Actually, God knows that as soon as you eat fruit from that tree, you will understand new things, so that you will know what is right and what is wrong just like God does." **6** The woman saw that the tree's fruit looked good to eat and that the tree itself was very beautiful. She also wanted to eat the fruit so that it would make her wise. So she picked some of the fruit off the tree and ate it. She also gave some of the fruit to her husband, who was there with her, and he ate it too. **7** Suddenly they both understood new things, and they realized that their bodies were bare. So they sewed some fig tree leaves together and made clothes for themselves to cover their nakedness.

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

snake tricked me, so I ate some of the fruit." **14** So Yahweh God said to the snake, "Because you did that,

I am cursing you more severely than all the livestock
and all the animals in the fields!
As a result, you must crawl along the ground on your belly,
and you will eat dust with your food
for as long as you live.
15 Besides that, I will cause you and your descendants to be enemies
with the woman and her descendants.
In fact, her descendant will crush your head,
and you will bite his heel."

16 Then God said to the woman,

"I will greatly increase how much you suffer when you bear children,
yes, you will suffer much pain when you give birth.
But you will still desire to be with your husband,
and he will dominate you."

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

Because of what you did, I have cursed the ground.
As a result, for as long as you live,
you will have to work very hard and suffer to grow enough food to eat.
18 In fact, thorn plants and thistle plants and other weeds will grow from the ground
and make it difficult for you to grow enough crops in your fields for food.
19 You will have to work hard and sweat a lot
in order to produce enough food to eat,
until you die and again become dirt,
which I created you from.
Yes, I created you out of dirt,

so dirt is what you will become again after you die."

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

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

Cain Kills Abel: The First Murder

4:1-16

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

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

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

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

Cain’s Descendants

4:17-24

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

19 When Lamech grew up, he married two wives. His first wife's name was Adah, and his other wife's name was Zillah. **20** Adah gave birth to a son named Jabal. He grew up and became the first of all those who live in portable shelters and raise livestock for a living. **21** His brother's name was Jubal. He became the first of all those who play harps and flutes.

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

23 One day, Lamech bragged to his two wives,

"Adah and Zillah, listen to what I have to say.
My wives, listen to this:
I killed a young man for wounding me!
In fact, I killed that man just because he bruised me.
24 God will avenge Cain seven times,
but I, Lamech avenge myself 77 times!"

People Start to Worship God Using His Name Yahweh

4:25-26

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

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

The Descendants from Adam to Noah

5:1-32

1 Chronicles 1:1-4

5 **1** Here is the family record of Adam and his descendants: On the day when God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. **2** He also created them to be male and female, and on the same day that he created them, he blessed them and named them "human beings."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God Destroys the World with a Flood

6:1-9:29

People on the Earth Become More and More Evil

6:1-8

6 1 Now it happened that people began to multiply in number all over the earth, and they were having daughters. 2 When those girls grew up, the sons of God saw that they were beautiful, so they chose any of them that they wanted and married them. 3 Then Yahweh said to himself, “My Spirit will not put up with human beings forever, because they are very corrupt. I will give them 120 years to repent.”

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

5 Yahweh saw that the people on the earth had become very evil, and that everything they thought about and desired was completely evil all the time. 6 As a result, he regretted that he had made them to live on the earth, and he felt very sad. 7 So he said to himself, “I will completely destroy from the earth all the people whom I created. In fact, I will destroy not only all the people, but also all the animals, including the creatures that crawl on the ground and the

birds that fly in the sky, because I regret that I ever made them." [8] But Yahweh was pleased with Noah.

Noah Prepares for the Flood

6:9-22

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

[11] Now the people on the earth had become wicked according to God's standards, and all over the earth they were doing violent things. [12] God saw how wicked everyone on the earth had become, because all the people on the earth were continually behaving in evil ways. [13] So he said to Noah, "I am going to destroy all people, because all over the earth they are doing violent things. In fact, I am going to destroy them and everything else on the earth too.
[14] Therefore you must build a very large boat for yourself and your family out of the best wood for building boats. Build rooms inside the boat, and seal it inside and outside with tar to keep water out. [15] You must make the boat like this: It must be 140 meters long, twenty-three meters wide, and fourteen meters high. [16] Make a half-meter high opening between the top of the walls of the ark and its roof all the way around, to let light and air in. Put a door in the side of the boat, and build three levels on the inside. [17] Listen carefully to me: I am going to bring a flood over the whole earth, which will destroy all the creatures under the sky that breathe air. As a result, every living thing that is on land will die! [18] But I will make a special agreement between me and you, so you must get on board the boat, and take your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. [19] You must also take into the boat two of every kind of animal, so that they stay alive with you. Each pair must include one male and one female. [20] Pairs of every kind of bird and every kind of animal, including every kind of creature that moves on the ground, will come to you so that you keep them alive in the boat. [21] You must also gather all the different kinds of food that people and animals eat and store it on the boat with you, so that

there will be enough food for you and your family and for all the animals." 22 So, that is what Noah did; he did everything exactly as God had commanded him to do.

Yahweh Sends the Flood

7:1-23

7 1 Then after they had finished building the boat, Yahweh commanded Noah, "You and your entire family must go into the boat, because I know that you are the only one among the people living today who is living rightly according to my standards. 2 Take with you seven male and female pairs of every kind of pure animal, and one male and female pair of every kind of impure animal. 3 Also take seven male and female pairs of every kind of bird that flies in the sky, so that later their offspring will live all over the earth. 4 You must do that, because seven days from today I will make it rain continuously all over the earth for forty days and nights. In that way, I will completely destroy from the earth every living creature that I have made."
5 Then Noah did everything exactly as Yahweh had commanded him to do.

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

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

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

17 For forty days and forty nights the flood kept getting deeper and deeper all over the earth, and as the water rose, it lifted up the boat so that it floated on the water above the ground. **18** So the floodwaters continued to rise and get much deeper all over the earth, while the boat floated safely on the water. **19** Eventually the water became so deep on the earth that even all the highest mountains everywhere under the sky were under water. **20** In fact, the water rose at least seven meters above the tops of the highest mountains, so that they were completely under water. **21** Then all the creatures that lived on land died. That included all the birds, the livestock, and the other living creatures, including every kind of creature that lived in large groups on the earth, as well as all the people. **22** Every living creature that breathed air and lived on dry land died. **23** That is how Yahweh completely destroyed all the living creatures that were on the earth, including all people and livestock and all the other creatures that lived on the land and also the birds that flew in the sky. Yes, he completely destroyed everything that lived on the earth, so that the only ones who were still alive were Noah and his family and the animals that were with them in the boat.

God Causes the Flood to Go Away

7:24-8:19

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

8 **1** But God never forgot Noah and his family and all the animals, both wild and tame, that were with them in the boat. So he caused a wind to blow over the water that was covering the earth, so that the water started to go down. **2** He also caused the springs in the deep ocean to stop gushing out water, and he caused the water to stop pouring from the sky, so that it stopped raining. **3** Then the water steadily went down from the surface of the land. After the 150 days had passed, the water had gone down **4** so much that on the seventeenth day of the seventh month of the year, the boat came to rest on one of the mountains in the Ararat mountain range. **5** The floodwaters continued to go down until on the first day of the tenth month of the year, the peaks of the surrounding mountains became visible above the water.

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

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

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

19 All the animals, including all the animals that crawl and all the birds and everything else that lives on land, also came out of the boat in groups of their own kind.

Yahweh Makes a Covenant with Mankind and All Other Living Things

8:20-9:17

20 Then Noah made an altar out of large stones to offer sacrifices to Yahweh. Next he chose some of every kind of animal and bird that is acceptable to sacrifice, and he killed them and burned their bodies on the altar as an offering to Yahweh to worship him. 21 Yahweh smelled the aroma of the offerings and was pleased, and he thought to himself, "Never again will I curse the ground because of mankind's sins, even though everything they desire and think about is evil from the time they are children. And never again will I destroy all living creatures the way I just did.

22 As long as the earth still exists,
each year there will always be a season to plant seeds and a season to harvest crops,
as well as cold weather and hot weather,
summer and winter,
and day and night."

9 1 Then God caused Noah and his sons to prosper by saying to them, "Have many children so that you and your descendants will become numerous and live all over the earth. 2 Every living creature on the earth will be afraid and terrified of you, including every bird that flies in the sky, along with every creature that moves on land, and all the fish in the ocean. I have put them all under your authority. 3 From now on every creature that is alive and moves is yours to eat as food. In the same way that I provided you green plants for food, now I provide you everything for food. 4 However, you must never eat meat that still has its blood in it, which made it live. 5 Also, I definitely require that anyone who murders someone must die. In fact, if

any animal kills a human being, I require that it must die. That is also true for human beings: If anyone murders another person, I require that he must die.

6 That's right, you must put to death
anyone who murders a human being,
because God made human beings
to be like himself.

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

8 Then God said to Noah and his sons, **9** "Listen carefully to me: I am making my agreement with you and your descendants. **10** It is also with all the living creatures that are with you, including the birds, the livestock, and all the other living creatures on the earth that are with you. That includes all those that came out of the ark and all the living creatures that will ever live on the earth. **11** My agreement that I am making with you is that never again will all living things die from a flood. I will not use a flood ever again to destroy everything on the earth."

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

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

Noah and His Three Sons After the Flood

9:18-29

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

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

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

> “I ask God to curse Ham’s son Canaan!
> Canaan will be the lowest servant for his relatives.”

26 Then Noah said,

> “Praise Yahweh, who is the God who takes care of Shem!
> May God cause Canaan to be Shem’s servant.
> **27** I also ask God to give Japheth much land
> and enable him to live together in peace with Shem.
> May God also cause Canaan to be Japheth’s servant.”

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

The Descendants of Noah's Sons

10:1-32

1 Chronicles 1:4-23

10 1 This is the record of the names of Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and the descendants they had after the flood was over.

Japheth's Descendants

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

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

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

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

Ham's Descendants

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

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

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

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

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

Shem's Descendants

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

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

24 Arpachshad had a son named Shelah, then Shelah had a son named Eber. 25 Then Eber
had two sons. The name of the first one was Peleg, which means "division," because during his

lifetime the people on the earth divided into separate groups and spread out everywhere. Peleg's younger brother's name was Joktan. 26 Joktan had sons named Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. Those were all Joktan's sons. 30 The region where they and their descendants lived reached from the city of Mesha in the west all the way to the city of Sephar, which is in the hill country in the east.

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

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

The Tower of Babel

11:1-9

11 1 Now at first, all the people on the earth spoke the same language, so that everyone understood each other. 2 As time passed, they moved from the eastern regions and eventually came to a wide, flat valley in the region of Shinar and stayed there. 3 Then they urged each other, "Come on, let us work together and make bricks from clay and put them in fire to make them hard." They used bricks to build with instead of stone, and they used tar between the bricks instead of mortar. 4 Then they urged each other, "Come on, we should work together and build a city for us to live in that has a very tall building that reaches high into the sky. That way we will become famous, and we will not separate from each other and live all over the earth."

5 But one day Yahweh came down from heaven and looked at the city and the very tall building that the people were building. 6 Then he said, "Look, they are one people group, and they all speak the same language. This is only the beginning of what they can do together. Soon

they will be able to do anything they plan to do. 7 So we must go down there now and mix up their language so that they are not able to understand what they say to each other." 8 In that way, Yahweh caused the people to leave from there and live in different places all over the world, so that they had to stop building the city and the tall building. 9 That is why the name of the city is Babel, which means "mixed up," because that is where Yahweh mixed up the language that everyone on the earth shared, and in that way he made them spread out from there all over the earth.

The History about Abraham 11:10-25:18

Shem's Descendants down to Abram

11:10-26

1 Chronicles 1:24-27

10 This is the record of Shem's descendants:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Terah's Children, including Abram

11:27-32

27 Here is the history about Terah and his descendants: Terah's sons were Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran had a son **whose name was** Lot. **28** While his father was still alive, Haran died in the land where he was born, in **the city of** Ur where the Chaldean people lived.
29 Meanwhile Abram and Nahor each married a wife. Abram's wife was named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was Milcah. Milcah and **her sister** Iscah were the daughters of **Nahor's brother** Haran. **30** But Sarai was not able to become pregnant, **so** she did not have any children.

31 Then **one day,** Terah gathered his son Abram and his grandson Lot, **who was** Haran's son, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, who was Abram's wife, and they **all** left from **the city of** Ur where the Chaldean people lived to travel to the region of Canaan. But when they arrived at **the**

city of Haran, they decided to live there instead. 32 Then many years later, when Terah was 205 years old, he died there in the city of Haran.

God Tells Abram to Move to Canaan

12:1-9

12 1 One day Yahweh commanded Abram, "You must move away from your homeland
and your relatives, including your father's family, and move to the land that I will guide you to.

2 I will make you and your descendants become an important people group,
and I will cause you all to prosper.
I will make you well-known,
and you and your descendants will bless many people.
3 I will bless everyone who blesses you,
but I will curse anyone who curses you.
I will bless all the people on the earth through you."

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

8 From the city of Shechem, Abram and his family moved south to the hill country that was
east of the town of Bethel. They set up their tents between Bethel to the west and the town of Ai

to the east. There Abram built another altar and burned sacrifices on it to worship Yahweh, and he addressed Yahweh by his name as he worshiped him. 9 Then Abram and his family moved from place to place southward until they reached the Negev Desert.

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

12:10-20

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

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

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

his soldiers to make sure that Abram left, so they forced him to leave the country, along with his wife and everything that he owned.

Abram and Lot Go Separate Ways

13:1-13

13 1 So Abram left the country of Egypt and traveled back to the Negev Desert. He took with him his wife and everything that they owned, and also his nephew Lot. 2 By that time Abram had become very rich, so that he owned many livestock and much silver and gold. 3 From the Negev Desert he and his family traveled from place to place northward until they came to the town of Bethel, to the place where he had lived in tents before, between the towns of Bethel and Ai. 4 That was the same place where he had previously built an altar. There again he sacrificed animals on the altar and worshiped Yahweh by name.

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

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

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

of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were also in that valley. 11 So Lot chose the entire Jordan River Valley for himself. Then he left Abram and moved to the east to live there. After that, Abram and Lot lived in separate places. 12 Abram stayed where he was in the region of Canaan, while Lot lived in another part of the region among the cities in the Jordan River valley and eventually moved his tents to the city of Sodom and stayed there. 13 But the people who lived in the city of Sodom were extremely wicked and were always sinning against Yahweh.

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

13:14-18

14 After Lot had left Abram, Yahweh said to Abram, "Look all around you from the place where you live. Look north, south, east, and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your descendants to own forever. 16 In fact, I will give you so many descendants that they will be as numerous as the specks of dust on the earth. No one will be able to count how many descendants you have, just as no one can count how many specks of dust there are. 17 So now, start walking through the land in all directions. Go throughout the entire land and look it over, because I am giving it all to you." 18 Then Abram obeyed Yahweh and moved his tents and settled near the oak trees on the land owned by a man named Mamre, near the city of Hebron. There he built an altar out of stones and burned sacrifices on it to thank and worship Yahweh.

Abram Rescues Lot from Four Kings

14:1-16

14 1 During that time Amraphel was the king over the land of Shinar, Arioch was the king over Ellasar, Chedorlaomer was the king over the land of Elam, and Tidal was the king over the

Goiim people. 2 Those four kings joined forces and went to war against five other kings, including Bera who was the king over the city of Sodom, Birsha who was the king over the city of Gomorrah, Shinab who was the king over the city of Admah, Shemeber who was the king over the city of Zeboyim, and the king over the town of Bela, which is also called Zoar. 3 Those five kings all united their armies as allies and fought against the four kings in the Siddim Valley, where the Salt Sea is now.

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

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

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

13 But someone from Sodom escaped from the battle and went to Abram the Hebrew and reported to him what had happened. At that time Abram was still living near the oak trees that

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

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

14:17-24

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

"May the greatest God, who owns heaven and earth, bless you.
20 Praise the greatest God,
because he enabled you to defeat your enemies!"

Then Abram gave King Melchizedek ten percent of everything that he had recovered in the battle. 21 After that, the king over the city of Sodom said to Abram, "Please return to me the people whom you rescued, but keep for yourself their belongings that you recovered." 22 But Abram replied to him, "I raise my hand and swear to Yahweh, who is the greatest God and the One who owns heaven and earth, 23 that I will not accept anything that is yours or your people's, not even a piece of string or the strap from a sandal. That way you can never say that

you were the one who made me rich. 24 So I will only keep what my warriors ate and the part of the plunder that Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre deserve for being my allies. Please let them have their part of the plunder."

God Makes a Covenant with Abram

15:1-21

15 1 After that, Yahweh said to Abram in a vision,

"Abram, do not be afraid.

I will protect you,

and I will give you a very great reward." 2 But Abram said to him, "Yahweh my Master, even if you reward me greatly, that will not benefit me, since I still have no children. So when I die, the one who will inherit all that I have is my servant Eliezer who is a foreigner from the city of Damascus." 3 Then Abram continued, "That's right, you have not given me any children, so that now when I die, one of my household servants will inherit everything I own!"

4 But immediately Yahweh said to Abram, "No, your servant Eliezer will not inherit your property, rather it will be your very own biological son who will inherit it." 5 Then Yahweh took Abram outside his tent and said to him, "Look up at the night sky and count how many stars there are, if in fact you are able to count them all." While Abram was looking at the stars, Yahweh said to him, "That is how many descendants you will have."

6 Abram trusted Yahweh, and because of that, Yahweh considered him to be righteous.
7 Then Yahweh said to him, "I am Yahweh who brought you here from the city of Ur that the Chaldeans rule, to give this land to you to own." 8 But Abram asked him, "Yahweh my Master, how can I be sure that this land will be mine?" 9 Yahweh replied, "Bring me a heifer, a female goat and a male sheep, each of which is three years old, as well as a dove and a young pigeon."
10 So the next day Abram brought all those animals to Yahweh and killed them. Then he cut the

animals' bodies in half lengthwise and placed each half a short space across from the other half in two rows, except for the birds, which he did not cut in half. 11 Then some vultures flew down and landed on the animal bodies to eat them, but Abram chased them away.

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

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

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

16:1-16

16 1 Now Abram's wife Sarai had still not given birth to any children for him, but she owned an Egyptian servant woman whose name was Hagar. 2 So she told Abram, "Please listen to this: As you know, Yahweh has not allowed me to have any children, so please have

marital relations with my servant woman Hagar so that maybe I can have a family through her children." Abram agreed to do what Sarai requested. 3 So Abram's wife Sarai gave her Egyptian servant Hagar to her husband Abram to be his second wife. This happened after Abram and Sarai had lived in the region of Canaan for ten years.

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

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

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

11 Then the angel also told her,

"Listen, as you know, you are pregnant.
You will have a son,
and you are to name him Ishmael, which means 'God listens,'
because Yahweh listened to you when you were suffering and has helped you.
12 When Ishmael grows up, he will be proud and free like a wild donkey.
He will fight against everyone,
and everyone will fight against him.
In fact, he will even be hostile
toward all his relatives."

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

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

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

17:1-27

17 1 Years later, when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh came to him and told
him, “I am God who is all-powerful. Live in a way that pleases me so that you will be
blameless. 2 I will establish my agreement with you, and I will increase the number of your
descendants so that they are very numerous.”

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

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

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

17 When Abraham heard that, he bowed with his face to the ground before God to respect him, but he laughed silently and thought to himself, “How can a hundred-year-old man like me father a child? And how can Sarah, who is ninety years old, still have a baby?” **18** So Abraham said to God, “Please let Ishmael be the one whom you bless as my heir!” **19** God replied, “Yes, but it is your wife Sarah who will give birth to a son for you. You must name him Isaac. He is the one I will establish my agreement with, as a permanent agreement that I will also keep with all his descendants who live after him.

20 I also heard what you asked me to do for Ishmael. So this is what I will do: I will also bless him, and I will give him many children and greatly increase the number of his descendants. In fact, he will be the father of twelve sons who become powerful leaders, and I will make him the ancestor of a large people group. **21** But I will establish my agreement with

your son Isaac. Sarah will give birth to him at this time next year.” 22 After he had finished talking to Abraham, God left him and ascended to heaven.

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

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

18:1-15

18 1 Then one day Yahweh appeared again to Abraham at the oak trees on Mamre’s land, while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the hottest part of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw that there were three men standing a short distance away. As soon as he saw them, he jumped up and hurried to them to greet them. Then he bowed before them with his face to the ground to show respect, 3 and he said to them, “Sirs, if you consider me worthy to be your host, please do not leave here without letting me serve you as my guests. 4 Please let me bring you some water, so that you all can wash the dust off your feet, and then rest under the shade of this tree. 5 Since you are here with me, let me also bring some food for you to eat. That way you can regain your strength before you continue on your way.” They replied to him, “Okay, do what you have proposed.”

6 So Abraham quickly went to Sarah inside their tent and told her, “Quickly get three batches of our best flour and bake some bread.” 7 Then he ran outside to his herd of cattle and chose one of his best calves that would be good to eat. Then he took it to one of his servants,

and the servant quickly butchered it and cooked it. **8** Then Abraham brought some yogurt and milk and the meat that his servant had prepared, and he put it all before his three guests to eat. Then he stood nearby them where they were sitting under the tree and served them while they ate.

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

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

18:16-33

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yahweh Destroys Sodom and Gomorrah

19:1-29

19 1 That evening the two angels arrived at the city of Sodom, while Lot was sitting at the gate of the city. When Lot saw them, he stood up and greeted them and then bowed before them with his face to the ground to show respect. 2 Then he said to them, “Sirs, please listen to this: Please come to my house so that I can serve you and you can lodge for the night there. That way too you can wash the dust off your feet. Then tomorrow morning you can get up early and continue traveling.” But the two angels replied, “Thank you, but we will just stay in the public square tonight.” 3 However Lot continued to urgently invite them until they finally agreed and went with him to his house. Then Lot prepared a big meal for them, including some flat bread, and they sat down and ate the meal.

4 But after supper, before they could lie down to sleep, all the men in the city of Sodom surrounded Lot’s house, including men of all ages. In fact, all the people from every part of the city were there. 5 Then they shouted to Lot, “Where are the two men who came to lodge with you tonight? Bring them outside to us so that we can have relations with them!” 6 But Lot went outside near the doorway to talk to them, and he closed the door of the house behind him. 7 Then he pleaded with them, “I beg you, my friends, do not do such an evil thing! 8 Listen to this please: My two daughters have never had marital relations with a man. Allow me to bring them out to you instead so that you can do with them whatever you want. But do not harm these men, because they are my guests and I am responsible for their safety.” 9 But the men of Sodom shouted at him, “Get out of our way!” Then they complained to each other, “This guy came here as a foreigner, and now he thinks that he can judge us!” Then they shouted at Lot, “We will do worse things to you than we do to your two guests!” Then they started shoving

hard against Lot and surged forward to break through the door of his house. 10 But Lot's two guests opened the door, reached outside and quickly pulled him back into the house with them and closed the door. 11 Then those two men who were angels caused the men who were at the door of the house to be blind, including every last one of them, so that they exhausted themselves groping around trying to find the door.

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

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

23 The sun was rising over the land as Lot and his family reached the town of Zoar. 24 Then Yahweh caused fire and burning rocks to fall like heavy rain from the sky on the cities of

Sodom and Gomorrah. **25** In that way, he completely destroyed those two cities and the rest of the valley, including everyone who lived in the cities and all the plants in the area. **26** But Lot's wife, who was walking behind him, glanced back at the city, and immediately she turned into a statue of solid salt rock.

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

Lot's Descendants from His Daughters

19:30-38

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

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

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

King Abimelech Takes Sarah to Be His Wife

20:1-18

20 1 Meanwhile Abraham and his family left from the place where they were living and moved south to the Negev Desert area. There they lived between the cities of Kadesh and Shur, and they stayed for a while in the city of Gerar. 2 While they were there, Abraham told people that his wife Sarah was his sister. So one day Abimelech, who was the king of Gerar, had some of his servants bring Sarah to his home to be his wife. 3 But that night God appeared to King Abimelech in a dream and warned him, "Listen, you are about to die because the woman whom you have taken to be your wife is already married to someone else!" 4 However, Abimelech had not yet slept with Sarah, so he asked God, "Lord, will you kill me and my people even if we are innocent? 5 Abraham himself told me that Sarah was his sister. And she herself also said that he was her brother. So I took her to be my wife with a pure conscience, and I did not know that I was doing anything wrong!" 6 God replied to him in the dream, "Yes, I realize that it was with a pure conscience that you took Sarah to be your wife. In fact, I am the one who kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you sleep with her. 7 Now then, you must give Abraham's wife back to him. He is a spokesman for me, so he will ask me to be merciful to you, so that you will not die. However, if you refuse to give Sarah back to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will definitely die!"

8 Early the next morning King Abimelech got up and called together all of his officials. He told them everything that had happened, and they were very afraid that God would punish them.
9 Then the king summoned Abraham and scolded him by saying, "You have treated us very

badly! I never did anything wrong to you, and yet you have caused me and the people whom I rule to be guilty of sinning terribly! You have wronged me in ways that should never be done to anyone!" 10 Finally, King Abimelech asked him, "What motivated you to do what you did?" 11 Abraham answered him, "I did it, because I thought that there was certainly no one in this city who revered God, so I was afraid they would kill me to get my wife for themselves. 12 Besides that, Sarah actually is my half-sister. We have the same father, but different mothers, and after we grew up, we got married. 13 Years later when God told me to leave my father's family, I asked her to do me a favor and tell people wherever we go that I am her brother."

14 Then King Abimelech brought many sheep and cattle and male and female servants to Abraham and gave them all to him. He also gave Abraham's wife Sarah back to him. 15 Then King Abimelech said to him, "Look, my land is available to you. Live wherever you decide is best." 16 Then he turned to Sarah and said, "Listen, I have given 12 kilos of silver to your brother. I am doing this so that everyone knows you did nothing wrong, and to compensate you for everything that has happened to you." 17 Then Abraham asked God to be merciful to the king. So God healed King Abimelech, as well as his wife and his female servants, and they were able to have children again. 18 Previously Yahweh had kept all the women in Abimelech's household from conceiving because he had taken Abraham's wife Sarah.

Isaac's Birth and Circumcision

21:1-7

21 1 Then Yahweh blessed Sarah just as he had said he would. Yes, he did for her exactly what he had promised to do. 2 So Sarah became pregnant and at the time God had appointed, she gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, just as God had promised him that she would. 3 Then Abraham named his son Isaac, the son whom Sarah had given birth to. 4 Also, when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, which was exactly what God had commanded him to do.

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

Sarah Has Abraham Send Hagar and Ishmael Away

21:8-21

8 Isaac grew as a child and reached the age when his mother stopped nursing him. When that happened, Abraham held a big feast to celebrate. **9** But during the feast Sarah noticed that Ishmael, the son of her Egyptian handmaid Hagar and Abraham, was making fun of Isaac. **10** So she was angry and told Abraham, “Get rid of that servant woman and her son! Her son must never share any part of what my son Isaac inherits from you!” **11** Abraham was very upset about that, because Ishmael was also his son and he cared about him too. **12** But God told him, “Do not be upset about the boy or your servant woman. Rather, listen to everything Sarah tells you to do, and do it, because Isaac is the one who will be the ancestor of your descendants whom I promised to you. **13** But I will also make your servant woman’s son become the ancestor of a large people group, because he is your son.”

14 Early the next morning Abraham got up, brought some food and a leather container full of water to Hagar and put them on her back. Then he sent her off with the boy, and they left and wandered around in the desert near the city of Beersheba. **15** When they had finished all the water in the container, she left her son under the shade of a bush. **16** She thought to herself, “I cannot bear to watch my son die.” So she went away from him and sat down by herself, about as far away as someone can shoot an arrow. Then she started crying loudly.

17 God also heard the boy crying, so one of his angels called to Hagar from heaven and said, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid. God has heard the boy crying over there and will take care of him. **18** So go help the boy to get up, and take care of him, because I

Yahweh will make him become the ancestor of a large people group." 19 Then God enabled Hagar to see a water well. So she went over to the well, filled her water container with water, and gave her son some water to drink.

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

King Abimelech Makes a Treaty with Abraham

21:22-34

22 Meanwhile, one day King Abimelech came with his army captain Phicol to Abraham and said to him, "I have noticed that God is with you and helps you in everything that you do. 23 Now then, please vow to me here in God's presence that you will never again deceive me or my children or my descendants. Instead, just as I have treated you kindly, vow that you will also be kind to me and my people in this country where you are living." 24 Abraham replied to him, "I vow that I will do those things."

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

27 Then Abraham gave some of his sheep and cattle to Abimelech, and he and Abimelech made a peace treaty with one another. 28 Abraham also separated seven female lambs from the rest of the flock. 29 So Abimelech asked him, "Why did you separate those seven lambs from the rest of the flock?" 30 Abraham replied, "Because I want you to accept them from me, to show everyone that you agree with me that I dug this well and it belongs to me." 31 Abimelech

accepted the lambs, so Abraham named that place Beersheba, which means "Well of the Seven" or "Well of the Vow," because that's where they both vowed to live at peace with one another.

32 After Abraham and King Abimelech made their peace treaty at Beersheba, Abimelech
and his army captain Phicol left from there and went back to their homes in the Philistines'
territory that Abimelech ruled over. 33 Then Abraham planted an evergreen tree named tamarisk
at the place called Beersheba, and there he worshiped Yahweh, who is the God who lives
forever. 34 After that, Abraham lived there in the Philistines' territory for many years.

God Tests Abraham's Trust in Him

22:1-19

22 1 Sometime later God decided to test Abraham. So he called to him, "Abraham!"
Abraham replied, "Yes, Lord?" 2 Then God commanded him, "Take your son with you, yes,
your only son Isaac whom you love, and travel with him to the region of Moriah. There you are
to burn him up on an altar as a sacrifice to me, on one of the mountains that I will show to
you."

3 So the next morning Abraham got up early and put a pack saddle on his donkey to get it
ready for the trip. Then he got his son Isaac and two of his servants, and they chopped some
firewood that they would use to burn the sacrifice and loaded it on the donkey. Then they started
traveling to the place that God had told Abraham to go to. 4 Three days later Abraham looked
ahead and in the distance he could see the mountain where they were headed. 5 Then he told his
servants, "You two stay here with the donkey, while my son and I go to the mountain over there
and worship God. Then we will come back to you."

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

God?" 8 Abraham answered him, "My son, God himself will provide a lamb for us to burn as a sacrifice to him." Then they continued walking together toward the mountain.

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

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

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

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

Abraham's Brother Nahor's Twelve Sons

22:20-24

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

Sarah Dies and Abraham Buys Some Land to Bury Her Body

23:1-20

23 1 Sarah lived to be 127 years old. That is how old she was 2 when she died in the city of Kiriath Arba, which is now called Hebron, in the region of Canaan. Abraham went to her and cried and mourned for her. 3 Later he stood up from mourning beside her and went to the leaders of the Hittites at the city gates and said to them, 4 "As you know, I am a foreigner who is living among you so I do not own any property here. Please sell me some of your land so I have a place to bury the body of my wife who has died." 5 The leaders of the Hittites responded to Abraham, 6 "Sir, please listen to what we propose: You are a powerful man living among us. So you may bury the body of your wife who has died in any one of our best burial sites. All of us are willing for you to use any of our burial sites to bury her."

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

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

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

was in the field, was officially sold to Abraham by the Hittites, so that he had a place where he could bury his wife who had died.

Abraham Finds a Wife for Isaac

24:1-67

24 [1] Abraham had lived a long time and was now very old, and Yahweh had blessed him in every way. [2] One day Abraham said to his chief household servant, who managed his entire estate for him, "Please put your hand under my thigh to show that you will do what I ask. [3] I want you to vow to me, with Yahweh the God who rules the heavens and the earth as your witness, that you will not arrange for my son Isaac to marry any of the Canaanite women who live around us here. [4] Rather, you must go to the country where I grew up, to my relatives who live there, and find a wife for him from there."

[5] But Abraham's servant asked him, "What should I do if the young woman I find refuses to come back with me to this land to live? Do you want me to take your son back there to your home country to marry her and live there?" [6] Abraham answered him, "No, be sure that you never take my son back there to live, [7] because Yahweh, the God who rules the heavens, brought me here from my father's household and from the land where the rest of my relatives live, and he vowed to me that he will give this land to my descendants. He will send one of his angels ahead of you to help you, so that you will find a woman from my home land for my son to marry. [8] But if the woman you find refuses to come back here with you, then you will be free from keeping this vow that you are making to me now. But no matter what happens, never take my son back to my home country!"

[9] So Abraham's servant put his hand under his master's thigh and vowed to him that he would do what Abraham had requested him to do. [10] Then he got ten of his master's camels ready for the trip, and after he loaded them with all kinds of valuable things from his master to use as gifts, he left with some other servants and made the long trip to the region of Aram Naharaim, to the city where Nahor lived. [11] When they arrived there, Abraham's servant had

the camels kneel down to rest outside the city near the well that was there. It was evening time, when the young women of the city were starting to come out to the well to draw water.

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

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

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

22 Finally, when the camels had finished drinking, the servant gave Rebekah a gold nose ring that weighed 6 grams, and two gold bracelets for her wrists that weighed 110 grams each. 23 Then he asked her, "Please tell me who your father is. Also, is there room at his house for me and my men to spend the night there?" 24 Rebekah answered him, "My father is Bethuel, and he is one of Nahor and Milcah's sons." 25 Then she added, "We have plenty of both straw and other feed at our house for the camels to eat, and there is also enough room for you all to stay

there tonight.” **26** Then the servant bowed to the ground and worshiped Yahweh, **27** by saying, “Praise Yahweh, the God who takes care of my master Abraham! He has never stopped being kind and faithful to my master, and he has guided me on my journey here to the home of my master’s relatives!”

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

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

34 So the servant told them, “I am Abraham’s servant. **35** Yahweh has abundantly blessed my master, so that he has become wealthy. Yahweh has given him many sheep and cattle, much silver and gold, many male and female servants, and many camels and donkeys. **36** Besides that, my master’s wife Sarah gave birth to a son for him when she was old, and my master has given him everything that he owns. **37** Before I came here, my master made me vow to do something for him. He said, ‘You must not arrange for my son Isaac to marry any of the Canaanite women whose land we have been living in. **38** Rather, go to my father’s family, to my own relatives, and find a wife for my son from among them.’ **39** So I asked my master, ‘What should I do if the young woman I find refuses to come back here with me?’ **40** He answered me, ‘Yahweh whom I serve will send one of his angels with you. He will make you succeed on your journey, so that you will find a wife for my son from among my relatives, someone from my father’s family. **41** At that time you will be free from keeping the vow you

are making to me: If you find a wife for Isaac but my family refuses to let her go with you, then you will be free from keeping your vow to me.'

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

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

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

54 Then Abraham's servant and his men ate supper and slept there that night. Early the next morning after everyone got up, Abraham's servant said to Rebekah's family, "Please let me return home now to my master." 55 But Rebekah's brother and her mother replied, "Please let

the young woman stay here with us for another ten days or so. Then you can go and take her with you." 56 But the servant said to them, "Please do not delay me. Now that Yahweh has made my journey successful, let me go so that I can return to my master." 57 So they replied, "Let's call Rebekah and ask her what she wants to do."

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

"Sister, we pray that God will give you
countless thousands of descendants,
and that he will help them conquer
all their enemies and rule over them!"

61 After Rebekah and her servants who were going with her packed their things, they got up on the camels they were going to ride and went with Abraham's servant. So Abraham's servant took Rebekah with him and started the journey back home.

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

66 Then the servant told Isaac everything that he had done on the journey. 67 Then Isaac took Rebekah into the tent where his mother Sarah had lived, and he married her, so that she

became his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was happy again after mourning for his mother who had died.

Abraham and Keturah's Descendants

25:1-6

1 Chronicles 1:32-33

25 1 Then Abraham got married again, and his wife's name was Keturah. 2 She had sons with him whom they named Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 Her son Jokshan had sons named Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants became people groups named the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. 4 Keturah's son Midian had sons named Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All of those were Keturah's descendants whom she had with Abraham.

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

Abraham Dies and Is Buried

25:7-11

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

his body next to the body of his wife Sarah whom he had buried there before. 11 After Abraham died, God blessed his son Isaac, who lived near the well Beer Lahai Roi.

Ishmael's Descendants

25:12-18

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

The Birth of Isaac's Twin Sons Jacob and Esau

25:19-26

19 Here is more of the history about Abraham's son Isaac and his descendants: After Abraham had Isaac, 20 Isaac grew up and married Rebekah when he was forty years old. She was a daughter of Bethuel, who was an Aramean from the region of Paddan Aram, and her brother was Laban who was also an Aramean. 21 However for many years Rebekah was not able to become pregnant, so Isaac prayed that Yahweh would give her children. Yahweh did what Isaac prayed for, so that she became pregnant with twins. 22 But the two babies wrestled

with each other inside her, so she asked, “Why is this happening to me?” Then she asked Yahweh about it. **23** Yahweh answered her,

“The ancestors of two future people groups are inside you.
They will be enemies starting now even before they are born.
One of them will be more powerful than the other,
so that the older son’s descendants will serve the younger son’s descendants.”

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

Esau Sells His Rights as the Firstborn Son to Jacob

25:27-34

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

29 One day when Jacob was making some soup, Esau came home from hunting out in the open country and he felt weak and hungry. **30** So Esau requested from Jacob, “Please let me have some of that very red soup because I feel weak and hungry!” That is why Esau’s nickname was Edom, which means “red.” **31** But Jacob replied, “First trade your rights as the oldest son to me for the soup, then I will give you some.” **32** Esau responded, “Look, I am about to die from hunger! So my birthright is of no use to me right now.” **33** Jacob insisted, “First make a vow to me today before God that your rights are now mine!” So Esau vowed to Jacob that he had traded

his rights as the oldest son to him for the soup. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau some of the lentil soup with some bread, and Esau quickly ate the meal and left. In that way, Esau treated his birthright carelessly as if it had no value.

God Establishes His Covenant with Isaac

26:1-5

26 1 Now there was another severe food shortage in the region. This was a different shortage from the one that had happened years before, while Abraham was still alive. So Isaac and his family went to the city of Gerar to ask for help from King Abimelech, who ruled over the Philistines. 2 Then Yahweh appeared to Isaac and commanded him, "Do not go to the country of Egypt, rather stay in this land where I tell you to live. 3 Live as a foreigner in this region, and I will stay with you and prosper you. In fact, I will give all the surrounding regions to you and your descendants, and I will continue to keep the vow that I made to your father Abraham 4 that I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. I will also give them all these regions. In fact, through your descendants I will bless all the people groups on the earth. 5 I will do all that because Abraham obeyed me and did everything that I ever commanded him to do."

Isaac Lies about His Wife Rebekah to the Philistines

26:6-11

6 Then Isaac did what God said and settled with his family in the city of Gerar. 7 Now Rebekah was very beautiful, so the men in that city started asking Isaac about her. Isaac was afraid they might kill him in order to have her, so he lied and told them she was his sister.
8 One day after Isaac had lived there a long time, the Philistines' King Abimelech looked down

from a window of his palace and saw to his surprise that Isaac was showing affection to his wife Rebekah. 9 So Abimelech summoned Isaac and scolded him, “It is obvious that Rebekah is actually your wife! So why did you tell us that she is your sister?” Isaac answered him, “I said that because I thought someone might kill me in order to have her as a wife.” 10 Then Abimelech scolded him further, “You have treated us very badly! Sooner or later, one of my men could have slept with your wife, and you would have caused us to be guilty of adultery!” 11 Then King Abimelech warned all his people, “I will definitely execute anyone who harms Isaac or his wife!”

Isaac Has Conflict with the Philistines over His Wells

26:12-33

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

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

19 Next Isaac’s servants dug at a new place in the valley and discovered a source of fresh water there. 20 But the herdsmen from the city of Gerar argued with Isaac’s herdsmen and said, “That well is ours!” So Isaac named the well Esek, which means “argument,” because they argued with him about it. 21 Then Isaac’s servants dug another well, but Gerar’s herdsmen

argued with them about that one too, so Isaac named it Sitnah, which means "hostility." **22** Then Isaac and his family moved from there and he had his servants dig a third well. This time Gerar's herdsmen did not argue about it, so he named it Rehoboth, which means "space," because he said, "Finally Yahweh has provided space for us, so that we will prosper in the land."

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

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

32 That same day Isaac's servants came to inform him about the well that they had been digging and announced, "We have struck water!" **33** So Isaac named the well Shebah, which

means “vow.” That is why even today the name of that city is still Beersheba, which means “well of the vow.”

Esau’s Foreign Wives

26:34-35

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

Jacob Steals Esau’s Blessing from Their Father Isaac

27:1-29

27 **1** One day when Isaac was an old man and he could no longer see, he sent for his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.” Esau answered him, “Yes, sir?” **2** Then Isaac told him, “Please listen closely: I am an old man now and I do not know when I will die. **3** So then, get your bow and arrows, go out in the open country and hunt some deer meat for me. **4** Next use the meat to cook a delicious meal for me the way that I like it, and bring it to me to eat so that I can bless you before I die.”

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

father, just the way that he likes it. 10 Then you can take the meal to your father to eat, so that he will bless you before he dies."

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

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

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

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

"Ahh, my son, you smell wonderful
like the fragrance of a field
that Yahweh has caused to flourish!
28 I ask God to provide you and your descendants plenty of rain from the sky for your crops and animals
and riches from the earth,
including abundant harvests and much wine.
29 I also ask God to cause nations to serve
and honor you and your descendants.
You will rule over your brother's descendants,
and they will submit to you and bow down to you.
Whoever curses you God will curse,
but whoever blesses you he will bless."

Esau Gets "Blessed" Too by His Father Isaac

27:30-40

30 As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and right after Jacob had left his father's presence, Jacob's brother Esau returned home from hunting. 31 Then he too cooked a delicious meal, and he took it to his father Isaac and said to him, "Father, please sit up and eat some of your son's deer meat so that you can bless me." 32 But his father asked him, "Which son are you?" Esau answered, "I am your oldest son Esau." 33 Then Isaac became so upset that his body shook very violently, and he asked Esau, "Who was it then that hunted deer meat and brought a meal to me? I finished eating it just before you came, and I blessed him. So God will definitely bless him." 34 When Esau heard what his father said, he shouted out with a very loud and distressed shout and begged his father, "Please bless me too, father!" 35 But his father responded, "Your brother came to me and tricked me and stole the blessing that I was planning to give you." 36 Then Esau exclaimed, "The name Jacob fits him exactly, because he has tricked me like this two times now! First he stole my rights as the oldest son, and now look what he has done: he has stolen my blessing!"

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

“Listen, you and your descendants will live
in a place where the land is not good for farming
and where there is not much rain.
40 You and your descendants will have to fight battles to stay alive,
and you will serve your brother and his descendants.
But when you rebel against them,
you will get free from their control over you.”

Jacob Flees from Esau

27:41-28:5

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

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

28 1 So Isaac summoned Jacob, blessed him and told him, “You must not marry a Canaanite woman. 2 Instead you must go right away to the region of Paddan Aram, to the home of your mother’s father, Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban’s daughters. 3 I pray that God, who is all-powerful, will bless you and give you many children and increase the number of your descendants, so that you become the ancestor of a community of peoples. 4 I also pray that he will bless you and your descendants the same way that he blessed Abraham, so that you will own this land where you have been living as a foreigner, the same land which God gave to him.” 5 Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, so Jacob started traveling to Laban’s house which was in the region of Paddan Aram. Laban was the son of Bethuel the Aramean and also the brother of Rebekah, who was Jacob and Esau’s mother.

Esau Marries Another Wife

28:6-9

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

went to the family of Abraham's son Ishmael and married Ishmael's daughter Mahalath, whose brother was Nebaioth.

Jacob Dreams about a Stairway to Heaven

28:10-22

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

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

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

20 Then Jacob made a vow to God and said, "God, if you will stay with me and protect me
as I travel on this journey and if you provide me food to eat and clothes to wear, 21 so that I

return safely to my father's home, then Yahweh, you will be the God whom I serve. 22 This stone that I have set up will be your house and mark the place that you appeared to me, and I will give back to you a tenth of everything that you give to me."

Jacob Meets Rachel and Laban in the City of Haran

29:1-14

29 1 Then Jacob left Bethel and continued traveling until he came to the land in the east where various people from that land lived. 2 When he arrived there, he looked around, and he saw a well in an open field. There were three flocks of sheep lying near the well waiting for water. That was the well that flocks drank water from, but there was a heavy, large stone covering the top of the well. 3 Every day shepherds would bring all the flocks of sheep there. They would work together to remove the stone from the top of the well and draw water for the sheep. Then they would put the stone back over the top of the well.

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

9 While Jacob was still talking with the shepherds, Rachel arrived at the well with her father Laban's sheep; it was her job to take care of them. 10 As soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of his uncle Laban with her father's sheep, he walked over to the well, removed the stone that covered it, and drew water for his uncle's sheep. 11 Then he kissed Rachel on her

cheek and he was so happy that he started crying. 12 Then he told her that he was her father's nephew, the son of her aunt Rebekah. So she ran home and told her father the news.

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

Jacob Works for Laban to Marry Rachel and Leah

29:14b-30

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

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

25 But the next morning Jacob was shocked to see that it was Leah **he had married**! So he complained to Laban, “You have treated me very badly! **You know that** Rachel is the one I served you for! So why did you trick me?” **26** Laban replied, “It is not our custom here for the younger **daughter** to marry before the older **daughter marries**. **27** **So then, keep Leah as your wife and** finish this week of celebrating your marriage to her. Then our family will also give you **my** younger daughter **to marry** if you will work for me for another seven years.”

28 So Jacob **agreed with Laban and** did what he said: he finished celebrating his marriage to Leah that week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to marry. **29** Laban **also** gave his servant Bilhah to Rachel to be her servant. **30** Then Jacob had marital relations with Rachel, and he loved her more than **he loved** Leah. Then he **started** working for Laban for seven more years.

Jacob’s Children

29:31-30:24

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

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

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

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

30 **1** Meanwhile **when** Rachel realized that she was not able to bear **any children** for Jacob,
she was jealous of her sister, and she demanded of Jacob, “Help me have children, or else I
want to die!” **2** Jacob became very angry with Rachel and responded, “I am not God! He is the
one who has prevented you from having children!” **3** Then Rachel told **him**, “You can have my
servant woman Bilhah **as a wife**. Have **marital** relations with her so that she will have children
for me, so that I too can have a family.” **4** So Rachel gave Jacob her servant Bilhah to be
another wife **for him**, and Jacob had **marital** relations with her.

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

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

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

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

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

16 That evening when Jacob came **home** from **working in** the field, Leah went out to greet
him and told **him**, “You must sleep with me **tonight**, because I have traded my son’s fertility

plants for time with you.” So Jacob spent that night with Leah. **17** God answered the prayers of Leah, so that she became pregnant and had a fifth son for Jacob. **18** Then she said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife.” So she named that son Issachar, which means “reward.”

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

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

22 God had not forgotten Rachel, so he answered her prayers and made it possible for her to have children. **23** Then she became pregnant and had a son, and she exclaimed, “God has made it so that I am no longer ashamed!” **24** She named her son Joseph, which means “may he give another,” because she said, “I pray that Yahweh will give me another son.”

Jacob Becomes Very Rich Working for Laban

30:25-43

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

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

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

34 Laban replied, “I agree, let’s do exactly as you have suggested.” **35** But that same day, Laban separated from his flocks all the he-goats that had stripes or spots, and all the she-goats that had speckles or spots, all that had any white marks on them, together with all the dark-colored lambs. Then he told his sons to take care of them, **36** and he and his sons took those animals a three-day walking-distance away from Jacob. Meanwhile Jacob continued taking care of the rest of Laban’s flocks.

37 Then Jacob cut some branches from poplar trees, almond trees, and chestnut trees, and made white streaks on them by peeling off long strips of bark, which exposed the white wood that was inside the branches. **38** Then he put those streaked branches in all the drinking troughs that the flocks would come to drink from, so that the flocks would see the branches. That way, whenever the animals that were ready to mate came to the troughs to drink, **39** they would see the branches as they were mating. As a result, they would have young that were striped or speckled or spotted. **40** Then Jacob separated those young animals from Laban’s flocks to form new flocks for himself, and he put the rest of the flocks with the striped and dark-colored animals in Laban’s flocks so that they would mate and have young that were striped or dark-colored. In that way, over time he created separate flocks of sheep and goats for himself that he kept separate from Laban’s flocks.

41 Whenever the stronger female animals were ready to mate, Jacob put the streaked branches in the drinking troughs in front of those animals so that they would see the branches as they were mating. **42** But whenever the weaker female animals were ready to mate, Jacob did not put the branches in the troughs. In that way, the young from the weaker animals were Laban’s and the young from the stronger animals were Jacob’s. **43** So Jacob became extremely

wealthy. He owned large flocks of sheep and goats, and many male and female servants and many camels and donkeys.

Jacob and His Family Flee from Laban

31:1-21

31 1 Then one day Jacob heard that Laban's sons were complaining and saying, "Jacob has
taken for himself everything that our father owned. In fact, he has gotten all his riches by taking
the animals that were our father's!" 2 Jacob also noticed that Laban no longer acted friendly
toward him the way he did in the past. 3 Then Yahweh told Jacob, "Return to your ancestors'
homeland, where your relatives live, and I will stay with you and help you."

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

10 One time during the season when the flocks of sheep and goats were mating, I had a
dream. In the dream I looked around and was surprised to see that the only male goats and
sheep that were mating with the female goats and sheep were striped, speckled, or blotched.
11 Then an angel from God called to me in the dream, 'Jacob!' and I answered, 'Yes, Lord?'
12 Then he said to me, 'Look around and notice that all the male goats and sheep that are
mating with the female goats and sheep are striped, speckled, or blotched. I have caused that to
happen, because I have noticed all the wrong things that Laban has been doing to you. 13 I am

the God who appeared to you at the town of Bethel, where you poured oil on top of a memorial stone to dedicate the place to me, and where you made an oath to me. So then, get ready and leave this land immediately, and go back to your home land.'"

14 Then Rachel and Leah responded to Jacob, "We will not inherit anything from our father when he dies! **15** It is obvious that he treats us like strangers and not family. For example, he sold us to you, and then he spent all the money that should have been ours. **16** In fact, all the wealth that God has taken from our father rightfully belongs to us and our children. So then, you should do everything that God has told you to do."

17 So Jacob quickly got ready for the journey and helped his wives and his children get up onto some camels. **18** Then he started herding the camels and all his other animals toward the region of Canaan where his father Isaac lived. He took with him all his possessions that he had accumulated, including all the livestock that he had acquired while living in the region of Paddan Aram.

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

Laban Chases After Jacob and His Family

31:22-42

22 Three days later someone informed Laban that Jacob had run away. **23** So Laban took some of his relatives with him and chased after Jacob and his family for seven days until they overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. **24** But that night God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him, "Be sure that you do not threaten Jacob in any way."

25 By the time that Laban caught up with Jacob, Jacob had already set up his tents in the hill country of Gilead, so Laban and his relatives also set up camp there at a place nearby.

26 Then the next day Laban met with Jacob and complained to him, “Look what you have done! You have deceived me and dragged away my daughters like prisoners of war! **27** You should not have deceived me and secretly run away! You should have told me you were leaving! If I had known, we could have held a feast and sung joyful songs and danced together, with tambourines and lyres playing, before sending you on your way. **28** You did not even let me kiss my daughters and my grandchildren before they left! What you have done is foolish! **29** I have the power to harm all of you, but last night in a dream the God whom your father serves warned me not to threaten you in any way. **30** Now then, I understand that you left because you were so homesick to return to your father’s family, but why did you steal my gods?”

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

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

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

38 For twenty years I have worked for you! During all that time your sheep and your goats had no trouble bearing young, and I have never killed and eaten any animals from your flocks.

39 Whenever wild animals killed any of your animals, I never brought the dead animal to you
to prove I was innocent. Rather, I replaced them at my own expense. Besides that, you required
me to pay for any animals that anyone ever stole at any time of day or night. 40 That was my
situation! During the days, I suffered from the hot sun, and during the nights it was so cold that
I could not sleep. 41 It was like that for me during the entire twenty years that I was with you. I
worked for you for fourteen years in order to marry your two daughters, and I worked another
six years to earn flocks of animals from you, even though you changed my pay ten times. 42 If
God, whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac serve and revere, had not been with me to take
care of me, there is no doubt that I would now be leaving here with absolutely nothing. But God
knows how much you have mistreated me and how hard I have worked for you, so last night he
rebuked you."

Jacob and Laban Establish a Peace Treaty with Each Other

31:43-55

43 Then Laban responded to Jacob, "These women are my daughters, and their children
are my grandchildren, and these flocks are also mine. In fact, all that you see here is mine! But
there is nothing I can do today to keep my daughters or their children near me any longer!
44 So then, you and I should make a peace treaty with each other, and there should be
something to remind us to keep that treaty." 45 So Jacob picked out a large stone and set it up
on its end as a monument to mark the place where they made their treaty. 46 Then he told his
relatives, "Gather some more stones." So they all gathered stones and put them in a large pile.
Then everyone ate a meal together there next to the pile of stones. 47 Laban gave the pile the
Aramaic name Jegar Sahadutha, which means "pile that reminds," while Jacob gave it the
Hebrew name Galeed, which has the same meaning. 48 Laban said to him, "Starting today this
pile of stones will remind you and me about our peace treaty." That is why the name of that
place is Galeed. 49 Another name for the place is Mizpah, which means "watchtower," because
Laban said to Jacob, "May Yahweh watch both of us to make sure that we keep our treaty while
we are apart from each other. 50 If you treat my daughters badly, or if you marry other wives

besides them, remember that even if no one else is watching us, God is always watching both of us to hold us accountable."

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

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

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

32:1-21

32 1 Meanwhile Jacob continued on his journey toward home with his family, and some angels from God met him. 2 When Jacob saw the angels, he exclaimed, "This is God's army!" So he named that place Mahanaim, which means "two armies."

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

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

9 Then he prayed, "Dear Yahweh, the God whom my grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac served, you told me to go back to my country where my relatives live, and that you would cause me to prosper. **10** I am not worthy of how kind and faithful you have always been to me as I have served you. When I first crossed this Jordan River, all that I owned was my walking stick, but now my family and belongings are enough to form two large groups. **11** Please rescue me now from my brother Esau, because I am afraid that he and his men will come and attack me as well as these mothers and our children! **12** But you promised me that you would greatly prosper me, and that you would make my descendants as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore, which are so numerous that no one can count them all."

13 Then Jacob spent the night there, and during that time he selected many of his animals to give to his brother Esau, **14** including 200 female goats and twenty male goats, 200 female sheep and twenty male sheep, **15** thirty mother camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. **16** Jacob put his servants in charge of the animals, with each kind of animal in a separate group. Then he ordered his servants, "Go ahead of me, one group at a time, and keep some distance between each group of animals." **17** He also ordered the servant in charge of the first group of animals, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, 'Who is your master, and where are you headed? And who do these animals belong to that you are driving ahead of you?' **18** then you are to tell him, 'Esau, sir, these animals belong to Jacob who humbly serves you. He has sent them to you as a gift. In fact, he is following us here.'"

19 In the same way, Jacob ordered the servants who were in charge of the second and third groups of animals, and all the servants who were in charge of the other groups, "When you meet Esau, tell him the same thing that I told the first servant. **20** Especially be sure to tell him

that his servant Jacob is following you there." Jacob did all that, because he thought that if he sent the gifts of animals ahead of himself to Esau, then Esau would stop being angry at him. He was hoping that when Esau saw the gifts, he would forgive him and welcome him when they met in person. 21 So Jacob's servants went ahead of Jacob with the animal gifts for Esau, while Jacob and his family stayed behind in the camp that night.

Jacob Wrestles with God, Who Names Him Israel

32:22-32

22 Later that same night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives and his eleven sons across a shallow place in the Jabbok Stream. 23 After he had taken them across the stream, he went back and had his servants take all his animals and other belongings across the stream too. 24 Then Jacob was there by himself for a while, and a man came and fought with him until daybreak. 25 When the man realized that he was not able to defeat Jacob, he struck him on his hip, so that it went out of place as they fought with each other. 26 Then the man said to him, "Let go of me, because it is daybreak!" But Jacob replied, "No! I will not let go of you until you first bless me!" 27 So the man asked him, "What is your name?" He answered, "My name is Jacob." 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but rather it will be Israel, which means 'he who wrestles with God,' because you have wrestled with God and with people, and you have won."

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

31 The sun was shining as Jacob left Penuel and returned to his family. He was limping as he walked because of his hip injury. 32 That is why even today the people of Israel do not eat

meat that comes from an animal's hip joint, because that is the place on Jacob's hip that God struck and injured.

Jacob Reunites with Esau and Settles in the City of Shechem

33:1-20

33 1 Then Jacob looked and saw in the distance that Esau was coming toward him, and with him were 400 men! So Jacob quickly divided up his children among Leah, Rachel and his two servant wives. 2 He put his servant wives and their children first in line, then Leah with her children behind them, and Rachel with her son Joseph last. 3 Then Jacob himself went ahead of them all toward his brother. As he got closer to him, he bowed with his face to the ground seven times to show respect.

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

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

sent to you, because God has been kind to me, so that I have all that I need." Jacob kept insisting that Esau accept the animals from him until finally he accepted them.

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

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

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

Shechem Rapes Dinah, and Jacob's Sons Take Revenge

34:1-31

34 1 Then one day Dinah, who was the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went out to visit with some of the local women. 2 The chief of that region was a Hivite named Hamor. His son

Shechem saw how beautiful Dinah was, so he grabbed hold of her and raped her. 3 Shechem admired Jacob's daughter Dinah so much that he fell in love with her and spoke sweetly to her to try to woo her. 4 Then Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Negotiate things for me so that I can marry this girl."

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

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

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

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

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

25 Three days later, when the men of the city of Shechem were all still sore from being circumcised, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, who were Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the city, with no one opposing them. They killed all the men there **26** with their swords, including Hamor and his son Shechem. Then they got Dinah from Shechem's house and left the city. **27** Next all Jacob's sons went into the city and took everything valuable from the dead bodies and from the rest of the city. They did that, because that was where Shechem had dishonored their sister. **28** They plundered whatever was in the city and in the surrounding fields, including the people's flocks of sheep and goats, their herds of cattle and their donkeys. **29** They carried away all the valuable things the people of Shechem had owned, including everything that was in their houses. They also captured their women and children.

30 Later Jacob scolded Simeon and Levi by saying, "You have brought me serious trouble by causing the Canaanites and Perizzites who live in this land to hate us! I only have a few men to defend us, so if they all join forces against us and attack us, they will destroy us and the rest

of our family!” 31 But Simeon and Levi responded, “Shechem should not have treated our sister like a whore!”

God Blesses Jacob at the Town of Bethel

35:1-15

35 1 Then God commanded Jacob, “Leave here and move to the town of Bethel. Build an altar there and offer sacrifices on it to worship me as the God who appeared to you there when you were running away from your brother Esau.” 2 So Jacob told his family and everyone else who was with him, “Get rid of the idols you have that other people worship. Also wash and make yourselves clean and put on clean clothes. 3 Then we will leave here and move to the town of Bethel. There we will build an altar and worship God because he helped me during the time when I was in trouble. He has always been with us and taken care of us everywhere that we have gone.” 4 So they gave Jacob all their idols and all their earrings. Then Jacob buried all those things at the base of the oak tree that was near the city of Shechem.

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

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

9 Now that Jacob had returned from the region of Paddan Aram, God appeared to him at Bethel again. There God blessed him 10 and said to him, “Although your name has been Jacob,

that will no longer be your name. Rather, you will have the name Israel!” So once again God gave Jacob the name Israel.

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

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

Rachel Dies Giving Birth to Benjamin

35:16-20

16 Later Jacob and his family moved on from Bethel and headed for the town of Ephrath. While they were still some distance from there, his wife Rachel went into labor, but she was experiencing great difficulty. **17** Then when her labor pain was at its worst, the baby was born and the woman who was helping her deliver exclaimed to her, “Do not despair! You now have another son!” **18** But Rachel was dying, and as her spirit was leaving her body, she named her baby Benoni which means “son of my sorrow”. But later, his father Jacob changed his name to Benjamin, which means “son of my right hand.”

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

Jacob's Twelve Sons

35:21-26

21 Then Israel and his family moved on from there and set up their tents on the south side
of the tower of Eder. 22 While they were living in that area, Israel's son Reuben committed
adultery with his father's servant-wife Bilhah, and Israel found out about it.

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

Isaac Dies

35:27-29

27 Then Jacob went home to his father Isaac in the city of Mamre, which also has the name
Kiriath Arba or Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac and their families had lived for a while as
foreigners. 28 Isaac lived to be 180 years old. 29 Then, after living a long, full life, he took his

last breath and died, and he joined his ancestors who had died before him. Then his sons Esau and Jacob buried his body.

Esau's Descendants

36:1-19

1 Chronicles 1:34-54

36 **1** Here is a record about the descendants of Esau, whose name was also Edom. **2** Esau had married two Canaanite women. Their names were Adah, who was the daughter of a Hittite man named Elon, and Oholibamah, whose father was Anah and whose grandfather was a Hivite named Zibeon. **3** Esau also married Basemath, who was Ishmael's daughter and Nebaioth's sister.

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

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

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

Timna had a son they named Amalek. Eliphaz's sons were all grandsons of Esau and his wife Adah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seir's Descendants

36:20-30

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

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

[23] Shobal's sons were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

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

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

[28] Dishan's sons were Uz and Aran.

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

The Rulers over the Land of Edom

36:31-43

1 Chronicles 1:43-54

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

Hanan, who was the son of Acbor, replaced him as king. 39 When King Baal-Hanan died,
Hadar replaced him as king, and the name of his hometown that he ruled from was Pau. His
wife's name was Mehetabel, who was the daughter of Matred and the granddaughter of Me-
Zahab.

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

Joseph's Dreams Anger His Brothers

37:1–11

37 1 Jacob continued to live in the region of Canaan where his father Isaac had lived for a
while as a foreigner. 2 Here is more of the record about Jacob and his family: One day his
seventeen-year-old son Joseph was taking care of the family's flocks of sheep and goats. Joseph
was helping his brothers who were the sons of his father's servant wives Bilhah and Zilpah, and
he told their father about the bad things they were doing.

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

5 One night Joseph had a dream, and he told his brothers about it. That made them hate him
even more than before. 6 This is what he told them, "Please listen to this dream that I had: 7 In
it I saw us working out in a field cutting and tying bundles of grain stalks. Then suddenly the
bundle that I had made stood up straight. Then I saw that the bundles you had made stood
around my bundle and bowed down to my bundle to show respect." 8 His brothers responded to

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

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

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

37:12-36

12 Sometime after that, Joseph’s brothers took their father’s flocks of sheep and goats to graze in the fields near the city of Shechem. **13** Then one day Israel said to Joseph, “As you know, your brothers are tending our flocks near the city of Shechem. Get ready so that I can send you to them.” Joseph responded, “I am ready to go.” **14** Then Israel told him, “Please go and check on how your brothers and the flocks are doing. Then report back to me what you find out.” So Israel sent him on his way from their home in the valley near the city of Hebron, and Joseph traveled to the city of Shechem. **15** When he arrived there, a man saw him searching around in the nearby fields and asked him, “What are you looking for?” **16** He replied, “I am looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are tending their flocks?” **17** The man answered, “They were here and then left, but I overheard them say that they were going to the town of Dothan.”

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

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

21 But Reuben heard their plan, so he tried to rescue Joseph from them by urging them, "We should not kill him." **22** Then he continued, "You must not take his life. Instead put him into this pit here in the desert, but you must not harm him." Reuben was planning to rescue Joseph from them and take him back home to their father.

23 When Joseph reached his brothers, they took hold of him and ripped off the colorful robe that he was wearing. **24** Then they grabbed him and put him into the pit. The pit was empty and completely dry inside.

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

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

32 Then they had someone take the colorful robe back to their father and say to him for them, "We found this robe. Please look at it to see whether or not it is your son's." **33** Jacob recognized the robe and exclaimed, "This is my son Joseph's robe! Clearly a fierce animal has torn him to bits and eaten him up!" **34** Then Jacob tore his clothes in grief, put on mourning clothes, and for many days he mourned that his son had died. **35** All Jacob's sons and daughters came to him and tried to console him, but he did not let them comfort him. Instead

he said to them, "No, I will continue to mourn for my son until I die and go down to be with him in the afterworld." So Joseph's father continued to mourn for him.

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

Judah and His Daughter-in-law Tamar

38:1-30

38 **1** About that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to the town of Adullam and stayed near the home of a man from there whose name was Hirah. **2** While he was living there, he met a Canaanite woman whose father was Shua, and he married her. Then he had marital relations with her, **3** and she became pregnant. When she gave birth, she had a son, whom Judah named Er. **4** Then Judah's wife became pregnant again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Onan. **5** Then she became pregnant yet again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Shelah. When she gave birth to Shelah, Judah was at the town of Chezib.

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

8 After that, Judah told his son Onan, "Marry your brother's widow Tamar according to our custom so that you fulfill your obligation to her as her brother-in-law and have children with her for your deceased brother." **9** However Onan knew that the children they would have together would not belong to him. So whenever he had marital relations with Tamar, he wasted his semen on the ground to keep her from getting pregnant and having any children for his brother. **10** Yahweh considered what Onan did to be evil, so he caused him to die too.

11 Then Judah told his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Go and live at your father's house, and do not marry again until my son Shelah is old enough to marry you." Actually Judah did not want

Shelah to marry Tamar because he was afraid that if he did, he would also die like his brothers had. So Tamar went home to her father's house and stayed there.

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

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

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

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

24 About three months later, someone told Judah, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has acted
like a prostitute. In fact, look, she is now pregnant from doing that!” Judah responded angrily,
“Take her outside the town and burn her to death!” 25 So they went to get her, but as they were
taking her out of the town, she sent a messenger to her father-in-law along with his things and
told the messenger to say, “The man who owns these things is the one who got me pregnant.
Please identify the man who owns this name seal with its cord and this walking stick.”
26 Judah recognized his things and confessed, “Tamar is right, and I am wrong, because I
refused to have my son Shelah marry her as I was supposed to!” So they released Tamar, and
after that Judah never had sexual relations with her again.

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

Potiphar’s Wife Tries to Seduce Joseph

39:1-23

39 1 Now as you know, some Ishmaelite traders had taken Joseph down to the country of
Egypt, and an Egyptian named Potiphar had bought him as a servant from them. Potiphar was
one of King Pharaoh’s officers, the captain over the king’s personal guards. 2 As Joseph
worked in his Egyptian owner’s house, Yahweh was with him and helped him, so that he
succeeded in everything he did. 3 His owner realized that Yahweh was with him and was

helping him to succeed in everything that he did. **4** So Potiphar was pleased with Joseph and made him his personal servant. He also put him in charge of managing his household and taking care of everything else that he owned. **5** From the time that Joseph's Egyptian owner did that, Yahweh blessed the household of that Egyptian man for Joseph's sake. He blessed everything that belonged to him, including everything in his home and in his fields. **6** In fact, after Joseph's owner put him in charge of everything that he owned, he did not need to concern himself with anything in his household except for personal matters like deciding what kind of food he wanted to eat.

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

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

16 So Potiphar's wife kept Joseph's robe with her until her husband, Joseph's owner, returned home. **17** Then she told him the same story. She said, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought among us came here to make a fool of me! **18** But as soon as I screamed loudly, he left his robe with me and ran outdoors!" **19** When Joseph's owner heard what his wife said

his servant had done to her, he became very angry. **20** So he had soldiers arrest Joseph and put him in the prison where they kept people who had committed crimes against the king.

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

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

40:1-23

40 **1** Sometime after that, the head wine-server and the head baker disobeyed their master, who was Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. **2** As a result, King Pharaoh was furious with those two officers. **3** So he had his soldiers arrest them and put them in prison at the captain over the guards' house, in the same prison where Joseph was. **4** There the captain over the guards appointed Joseph to take care of them, so he served them, and they remained in prison for some time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joseph Explains the Meaning of Pharaoh's Dreams

41:1-36

41 1 Two whole years later, King Pharaoh had a dream. In the dream he saw himself standing beside the Nile River. 2 Suddenly, seven healthy-looking, fat cows walked up out of the river and started eating the tall grass beside the river. 3 Next he saw that seven sickly-looking, scrawny cows walked up out of the river and stood next to the first cows on the river bank. 4 Then the sickly-looking, scrawny cows devoured the seven healthy-looking, fat cows. Just then Pharaoh woke up.

5 Then he went back to sleep and had a second dream. This time he saw seven plump, well-formed heads of grain growing on the same plant. 6 Suddenly, seven small heads of grain that the hot desert wind had dried out started growing on the same plant beside the first heads. 7 Next, the small heads of grain gobbled up the seven big, well-formed heads. At that point, Pharaoh woke up and realized that he had been dreaming.

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

sure enough, everything happened exactly the way he had explained the dreams to us: you returned me to my former work as your wine-server, and you had your soldiers execute the baker."

14 When Pharaoh heard that, immediately he had servants summon Joseph. So they went right away and got him out of the prison. Then after he shaved his head and face and changed into appropriate clothing, he went before Pharaoh. 15 Then Pharaoh said to him, "I had a dream, but no one has been able to explain to me what it means. But someone told me about you, that when you hear a dream, you are able to explain what it means." 16 Joseph replied to him, "Sir, I do not have that ability on my own, but God will explain your dream so that you, King Pharaoh, will have peace in your heart."

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

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

25 Then Joseph told King Pharaoh, "Your Majesty, both of your dreams mean the same thing. Through them, God is revealing to you what he is going to do. 26 The seven healthy cows represent seven years, and the seven well-formed heads of grain represent the same seven years. Both dreams mean the same thing. 27 The seven scrawny and sickly cows that walked up out of the river behind the first cows represent a different seven years, and so do the seven small heads of grain that the desert wind had dried out. They both mean that there will be a

famine that lasts seven years. 28 King Pharaoh, that is what I was talking about when I told you that God is revealing to you what he is going to do. 29 Listen, first there will be seven years when people will have more than enough food to eat throughout the entire country of Egypt. 30 But after that, there will be a famine that lasts seven years. As a result, the people in Egypt will forget what it was like in their country during all the years when they had more than enough food to eat, because the famine will devastate the country so that many people will starve. 31 That's right, people will completely forget about the years when there was plenty of food, because the famine that comes after that will be so severe. 32 The fact that you, King Pharaoh, had two different dreams that mean the same thing shows that God has decided what he is going to do, and he will make it happen soon.

33 So now, your Majesty, I recommend that you look for a man who is intelligent and knows what to do, and put him in charge over the country of Egypt. 34 Sir, you should also appoint regional administrators in charge of the country, and have them collect one-fifth of the crops that people harvest throughout the country during the seven years when harvests are plentiful. 35 Have them collect all that surplus grain during the prosperous years ahead when there will be plenty of food. Using your authority, King Pharaoh, have them stockpile that grain in storehouses in the cities and have soldiers guard it, so that there will be food for the people. 36 That food should stay in storage for the people of the country to eat during the famine that will last seven years in the country of Egypt, so that they will not starve to death because of the severe lack of food."

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

41:37-57

37 What Joseph proposed seemed like a good plan to Pharaoh and all his officials. 38 So Pharaoh exclaimed to them, "Certainly we cannot find anyone else more qualified than this man whom God's Spirit guides!" 39 Then he said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, no one else is as intelligent as you are or knows what to do in this situation.

40 So I am putting you in charge of my household and my kingdom, so that all the people in my country must obey whatever you command. Only I who am king will have higher authority than you." **41** Then Pharaoh said, "Listen, I hereby put you in charge of the whole country of Egypt." **42** Then he took off his official identification ring and put it on Joseph's finger to show that he had appointed him. He also gave Joseph expensive linen clothes to wear and put a chain made of gold around his neck. **43** Then Pharaoh had Joseph ride around in the chariot that showed he was the second highest ruler in the country. As he rode, messengers walked in the road ahead of him calling out to everyone, "Make way!" In that way, Pharaoh officially appointed Joseph to be in charge of the whole country of Egypt.

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

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

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

explained, "It is because God has helped me to prosper in the country where I have suffered so much."

53 Finally the seven years were over when food was plentiful in the country of Egypt.
54 Then the seven years began when there was a severe lack of food, which is exactly what Joseph had predicted would happen. The famine spread to every country, but throughout the whole country of Egypt there was still food in the storehouses. 55 When everyone in Egypt became very hungry because of the famine, they begged King Pharaoh for food. So he commanded them, "Go ask Joseph for help, and do whatever he commands you to do."
56 Since the severe food shortage was affecting the whole country, Joseph had his helpers open up all the storehouses full of grain, and he started selling the grain to the people of Egypt. Then the famine became worse and worse throughout the country of Egypt. 57 In fact, people from all over the world started coming to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the food shortage was so terrible throughout the whole world.

Joseph's Brothers Come to Egypt to Buy Grain

42:1-38

42 1 Meanwhile back in the region of Canaan, when Jacob heard that there was grain for sale in the country of Egypt, he told his sons, "Do not just stand around doing nothing! 2 Listen to this! I heard that there is grain for sale in the country of Egypt. So go down there and buy some for us and our families to eat, so that we can stay alive and not starve to death." 3 So Joseph's ten older brothers left home and traveled down to Egypt to buy some grain there. 4 But Jacob did not allow Joseph's younger brother Benjamin to go to Egypt with the rest of his brothers, because Jacob was afraid that something bad might happen to him.

5 Israel's sons arrived in Egypt along with many other people who were coming there to buy food, because the severe food shortage was also affecting everyone in the region of Canaan.
6 Since Joseph was the administrator over the country of Egypt, he was the one selling grain to

people who came to him from all over the country. So Joseph's brothers also went before him like everyone else and bowed down with their faces to the ground to show him respect. 7 When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended that he did not know them. In fact, he spoke to them sternly and asked them, "What country are you from?" They answered him, "Sir, we are from the region of Canaan to buy some grain." 8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not realize who he was.

9 Then Joseph remembered what he had dreamed about his brothers long ago, so he accused them, "You are secretly gathering information about our country! You came here to find out where our country is weak!" 10 But his brothers replied to him, "Sir, we are not spies. Rather, we are humble men who have come here only to buy some grain. 11 We are all brothers who have the same father. We are humble, trustworthy men, not spies."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

43:1-34

43 1 The famine continued to be severe in the region of Canaan. 2 So when Jacob and his family finished eating all the grain that his sons had brought from the country of Egypt, he said to them, "Go back to Egypt and buy some more grain for us and our families." 3 But his son Judah replied to him, "The governor there sternly warned us that we cannot go to him again to buy grain if our youngest brother is not with us. 4 So if you will allow our youngest brother to go with us, then we can go to Egypt and buy more grain for you. 5 However if you refuse to let him go with us, we cannot go there, because the governor warned us that we cannot go to him again if our youngest brother is not with us."

6 Then their father Israel asked them, "Why did you cause trouble for me by telling the governor that you have a younger brother?" 7 They answered him, "The governor asked us many questions about ourselves and about our family. He asked us if our father was still alive

and if we had another brother. We just answered his questions honestly. There is no way we could have known that he would require us to take our brother down there to him!"

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

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

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

19 Then they approached Joseph's head house-servant outside the door to his house to speak to him. **20** And said, "Excuse us, sir, one time before this, we traveled all the way down here to Egypt to buy some grain. **21** But on our way home, when we arrived at the place where we lodged for the night, we opened our sacks. There in the top of each of our sacks was the

money we had paid to you for the grain! The money was all there! So we brought it all back with us to give to you. 22 We have also brought more money with us so that we can buy some more grain now. We have no idea who put the money in our sacks." 23 But Joseph's servant replied to them, "It is all right, so do not worry about it. The God whom you and your father serve must have put the money in your sacks, because I definitely received your money that you paid for the grain." Then Joseph's servant brought Simeon out of prison to his brothers.

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

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

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

31 After he had gotten control of his emotions and stopped crying, he washed the tears off his face and came back out of his room. Then he commanded his servants, "Serve the food to us." 32 So they served food to Joseph at his own table, and his brothers at their own table, and the Egyptians who were eating with him at their own table. Egyptians do not eat at the same table as Hebrew people, because Egyptians consider it unacceptable to do that. 33 Joseph's brothers were sitting at a table facing his table in the order of their ages, from the oldest to the youngest. When they noticed that, they were amazed and stared at one another. 34 Then Joseph had his servants serve food to his brothers from his table, but he had them serve Benjamin five

times more food than they served to any of the rest of his brothers. Then his brothers feasted and drank wine freely with him.

Joseph Tests His Brothers

44:1-17

44 1 Later Joseph ordered his head house-servant, “Fill the men’s grain bags with as much grain as they can take with them, and in the top of their bags, put the money that each of them paid for the grain. 2 Also put my silver cup in the top of the youngest one’s bag, along with the money that he paid for the grain.” So the servant did exactly what Joseph had ordered him to do.

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

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

10 Joseph’s servant replied to them, “Okay then, I will do as you suggest except for this: The one whom I find with my master’s cup is the only one who will become my slave. The rest of you will be innocent and free to go.” 11 So each of the brothers quickly took his grain bag off his donkey and put it on the ground, and each of them opened his own bag. 12 Then Joseph’s

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

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

Judah Begs Joseph to Set Benjamin Free

44:18-34

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

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

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

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

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

Joseph Reveals Who He Is to His Brothers

45:1-28

45 1 When Joseph heard that, he could no longer keep himself from crying in front of all
his servants, so he shouted to them, “All of you leave my presence!” Immediately the servants
left the room, so that no one else was with Joseph when he told his brothers who he was. 2 But
he started crying so loudly that many Egyptians heard him, including Pharaoh’s family. 3 Then
he exclaimed to his brothers in their language, “I am your brother Joseph! Is my father still

alive?" But Joseph's brothers could not reply to him, because they felt very afraid to be standing in front of him.

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

9 Hurry back to our father and tell him that his son Joseph has sent him this message: 'God has appointed me governor over the entire country of Egypt. So please come down here to live near me, and do not delay. **10** You can live in Goshen Province. That way you will live close to me with your children and your grandchildren, along with your flocks of sheep and goats, your herds of cattle and everything else that you own. **11** I will take care of you there, since the famine will last five more years. Please come so that the famine will not cause you and your family to lose everything you own and die.'"

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

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

16 When Pharaoh's household heard the news that Joseph's brothers had come there, Pharaoh and all his servants were happy. **17** So Pharaoh told Joseph, "Give your brothers this

message from me: ‘Load your donkeys with grain and go quickly back to Canaan. 18 Then bring your father and your families back here to me. I will give you the best area in the country of Egypt to live in, so that you will live well with the best of everything in the country.’”

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

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

25 Then Joseph’s brothers left Egypt and traveled home to their father Jacob in the region of Canaan. 26 When they arrived, they announced to him, “Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is the governor over the entire country of Egypt!” When their father heard that news, he was stunned and silent, because he could not believe them. 27 But after they told him everything that Joseph had said to them, and after he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him and his family

to Egypt, he recovered from the shock. 28 Then he exclaimed to them, "That's enough! It must be true! My son Joseph really is alive! I must go now and see him again before I die."

Jacob and His Family Move to the Country of Egypt

46:1-27

46 1 So Israel and his family started traveling toward Egypt with all their belongings.
When they reached the city of Beersheba, he offered some of his animals on an altar there as
sacrifices to God, whom his father Isaac had worshiped. 2 During the night God called to
Israel in a vision, "Jacob! Jacob!" Jacob replied, "Yes, Lord?" 3 Then God said to him, "I am
God, the God whom your father worshiped. Do not be afraid of moving down to the country of
Egypt, because I will make your descendants multiply and become a large people group while
they live there. 4 I will personally go with you down to Egypt and take care of you there. Later I
will definitely bring your descendants back here to Canaan. When you die, Joseph will be with
you."

5 After that, Jacob left the city of Beersheba, and his sons took him and their wives and
children in the wagons that King Pharaoh had provided for them to ride in to Egypt. 6 They
also brought with them their livestock and their other belongings that they had gotten in the
region of Canaan. Then Jacob and all of his descendants arrived in Egypt. 7 He brought his
entire extended family with him to Egypt, including his sons and daughters, and his grandsons
and granddaughters.

8 Here is a list of the names of Israel's descendants who came with him to Egypt, that is,
the names of Jacob's descendants: Reuben, who was his oldest son, 9 and Reuben's sons, who
were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 10 Simeon and Simeon's sons, who were Jemuel,
Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul, who had a Canaanite mother. 11 Levi and Levi's sons,
who were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12 Judah and Judah's sons, who were Er, Onan,

Shelah, Perez, and Zerah; actually, Er and Onan had already died in the region of Canaan.
Perez's sons were Hezron and Hamul. 13 Issachar and Issachar's sons, who were Tola, Puvah,
Job, and Shimron. 14 Zebulun and Zebulun's sons, who were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.
15 Those were the sons and grandsons whom Jacob and his wife Leah had together in the region
of Paddan Aram. They also had a daughter named Dinah. The total number of those
descendants was thirty-three.

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

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

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

26 Altogether Jacob had sixty-six blood relatives who went with him to Egypt. That
number does not include his wives or his sons' wives. 27 If you include Jacob, Joseph, and

Joseph's two sons, who were born in Egypt, then there was a total of seventy members of Jacob's family in Egypt.

Jacob Reunites with His Son Joseph and Meets King Pharaoh

46:28-47:12

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

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

47 **1** So Joseph went to King Pharaoh and informed him, "My father and my brothers and their families have come to Egypt from the region of Canaan and are now in Goshen Province. They brought with them their sheep, goats, cattle, and everything else that they own." **2** Then Joseph brought five of his brothers before Pharaoh and introduced them to him. **3** Then Pharaoh asked them, "What is your occupation?" They answered him, "Your Majesty, we raise sheep for a living, just like our ancestors did." **4** They also said to him, "We have come here to

live for a while in your country. The famine is so severe In the region of Canaan where we come from that there is not enough grass in the fields for our flocks. So then, sir, please let us live in Goshen Province."

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

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

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

How Joseph Ruled Egypt During the Rest of the Famine

47:13-26

13 Now after a while, the famine became so severe in the entire world that there was very little food available anywhere. The people of the country of Egypt and the region of Canaan were suffering badly because they did not have enough to eat. **14** So they bought grain from Joseph until there was no more money left in the country of Egypt or the region of Canaan. Joseph had his servants take the money to Pharaoh's palace. **15** When the people in Egypt and Canaan had spent all their money, people from all over Egypt went to Joseph and begged him,

"Sir, we have no more money! Please give us food so that we do not starve to death!"
16 Joseph responded, "Since your money is gone, bring me your livestock to pay for the food
that I will give you." 17 So the people brought their livestock to Joseph. They gave him their
horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys to pay for the food that he gave them. In that way
Joseph supplied the people with food that year, and they gave him all their livestock to pay for
it.

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

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

23 Next Joseph announced to the Egyptian people, "Listen, now that you and your
farmland belong to King Pharaoh, here are some seeds for you so that you can plant them in the
fields. 24 Then every harvest season, you must give him one-fifth of the crops you harvest. The
rest of what you harvest will be yours to use to plant in the fields and as food for you and your
families, including your children." 25 The people replied to him, "You have saved our lives!
Please continue to be kind to us, sir, and we will agree to be King Pharaoh's servants." 26 So
Joseph made a law that required people to give to Pharaoh one-fifth of all the crops they

harvested from the fields in Egypt. That law is still in effect today. The priests' land was the only land in Egypt that did not belong to Pharaoh.

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

47:27-31

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

Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons Ephraim and Manasseh

48:1-22

48 1 Some time after those things happened, someone told Joseph, "Listen, your father is
sick." So Joseph went to visit his father and took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him.
2 When they got there, someone informed Jacob, "Look, your son Joseph has come to visit
you." Immediately Israel exerted himself and sat up at the head of his bed and they greeted each

other. 3 Then Jacob told Joseph, “God who is all-powerful appeared to me long ago in the region of Canaan at the town of Luz. He blessed me there 4 by saying to me, ‘Listen, I will give you many descendants who will increase in number and become a community of peoples. I will also give this land to your descendants to own forever.’”

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

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

13 Then he brought his sons close to his father again. He had Ephraim stand in front of Israel’s left side, and he had Manasseh stand in front of Israel’s right side. 14 But Israel intentionally reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim’s head, even though Ephraim was Joseph’s younger son. Then he crossed his arms and put his left hand on Manasseh’s head, even though Manasseh was Joseph’s oldest son. 15 Then Israel blessed Joseph and his sons by saying,

> “I pray that the God whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac served will bless your sons.
>
> He is the God who has taken care of me my entire life.

16 He is also the Angel who saved me continually from every harm.
I pray that he will cause these young men to prosper greatly,
so that my family line and the family line of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac will continue through them
and so that they will have many descendants on the earth."

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

"The people of Israel will use your names when they bless people and say,
'May God prosper you like he prospered Ephraim and Manasseh.'"

In that way, Israel made Ephraim greater than Manasseh.

21 After that, Israel turned to Joseph and said to him, "As you can see, I am about to die, but God will always be with you and your brothers and all your descendants to help you. He will also take you back to the land that he gave to your ancestors. **22** Besides that, as part of your

inheritance from me, I hereby give you the city of Shechem, which I captured from the Amorites when I defeated them in battle. This is more land than I am giving to your brothers."

Jacob's Last Words to His Twelve Sons

49:1-28

49 1 Then Jacob summoned all his sons. He said to them, "Come together here, so that I
can tell you what will happen to you and your descendants in the years ahead.

2 My sons, gather around me, your father Jacob, and listen to me.
I, your father Israel, have something important to tell you.

3 Reuben, you are my oldest son,
the result of my strength and the first child I had as a young man.
You had high status and great authority in our family.

4 However, you are unstable like rushing water, so you will no longer have your important status in our family,
because you got into my bed with my concubine
and dishonored me! You actually climbed into my couch!

5 Simeon and Levi, you are partners.
You use your swords to do violent things together.

6 I will never participate with you when you plan evil things!
I refuse to make evil plans with you,
because you became angry and murdered many people,
and just to entertain yourselves you crippled some cattle.

7 May God curse you for being so fiercely angry
and malicious!
I ask God to scatter you and your descendants among the descendants of Jacob.
That's right, I ask him to scatter you throughout the land of Israel.

8 Judah, your brothers **and their descendants** will **highly** praise you **and your descendants**.

You will conquer your enemies.

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

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

that has returned **to its den** after **killing its** prey.

It stretches out **and** lies down **to sleep**.

No one dares to disturb that lion.

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

In fact, your descendants will rule

until the **highest** king comes

and the peoples **of the earth** obey him.

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

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

You will still have so much wine from other vines

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

12 **Your** eyes **will be** bright from **drinking abundant** wine,

and **your** teeth **will be** white from **drinking abundant** milk.

13 Zebulun, **you and your descendants** will live near the coast,

where there will be a **safe** harbor for ships.

Your territory **will extend** as far **north** as **the city of** Sidon.

14 Issachar, **you and your descendants will be like** a sturdy donkey

that is resting **on the ground** between two loads.

15 You will have a good place to rest,

in a land that is pleasant,

but you will work hard and carry **heavy loads**.

You will have to work **very** hard **for others** as slaves.

16 Dan, you **and your descendants** will rule your **own** people

and have equal status with the rest of the tribes of Israel.

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

18 Then Jacob paused and exclaimed, "Yahweh, I am looking expectantly to you to save me!"

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

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

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

22 Joseph, you and your descendants will become very numerous like fruit on a productive tree
that is growing next to a stream of water,
with branches full of fruit that hang over a nearby wall.

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

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

25 That strength/power comes from the God who has always taken care of me, your father.
He is the all-powerful God who will help you and your descendants
and bless you all with rain from above

and water from deep in the ground.

He will also bless you with many children and much livestock.

26 God has blessed me more

than he blessed my ancestors.

He has blessed me with riches that are greater than the riches that come from the ancient mountains.

I pray that God will abundantly bless you too, Joseph,

as the one he chose to set apart and honor above your brothers.

27 Benjamin you and your descendants will be like a fierce wolf.

You will always defeat your enemies

and take their possessions and wealth."

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

Jacob Dies and Is Buried

49:29-50:14

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

50 1 Then Joseph hugged his father in sorrow, and he cried over him and kissed him goodbye on the cheek. 2 Then he ordered his doctors who served him to prepare his father's body for burial. So they did that. 3 The process took forty days, which is how long it normally takes to prepare a body. The people in Egypt mourned for Israel for seventy days.

4 After that time of mourning Israel's death, Joseph said to Pharaoh's officials, "Please do this favor for me: please take a message to King Pharaoh for me and tell him 5 that when my father was about to die, he had me vow to him that I would bury his body in the region of Canaan, in a tomb that he had prepared for himself there. So ask the king to please let me go to Canaan and bury my father's body there. After that, I will come back here." 6 When Pharaoh heard Joseph's message, he replied, "Tell Joseph that he may go to Canaan and bury his father's body just as his father made him vow that he would do."

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

10 They traveled to the other side of the Jordan River and stopped at a grain threshing place owned by a man named Atad. There Joseph and the others mourned for his father very loudly and sorrowfully for seven days. 11 When the Canaanites who lived in the area saw them mourning like that at Atad's threshing place, they exclaimed to each other, "Wow! Those people from Egypt are mourning very sorrowfully for someone who died!" That is why the name of that place on the other side of the Jordan River is Abel Mizraim, which means "Egyptians' mourning place."

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

returned to the country of Egypt, along with his brothers and everyone else who had accompanied him to his father's funeral.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers That He Has Forgiven Them

50:15-21

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

Joseph Dies in Egypt

50:22-26

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

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

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

The Escape from Egypt (Exodus)

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

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

15 Now there were two Hebrew midwives named Shiphrah and Puah. The king of Egypt
said to them, **16** "When you help a Hebrew woman have a baby, pay attention right as the baby
is born. If the baby is a boy, you must kill him. If the baby is a girl, you may let her live."
17 But the midwives were afraid **to disobey** God. So they did not obey what the king told them

to do. They allowed the baby boys to live. 18 So the king summoned the two midwives and asked them, “Why are you doing this? Why are you letting the baby boys live?”

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

20 Therefore, the Hebrew people became numerous and very strong. God acted kindly to the midwives 21 because they were afraid to disobey him. He gave them each a husband and children.

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

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

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

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

8 The king’s daughter said to her, “Yes, go and find one.” So the girl went and found the baby’s mother and brought her to the king’s daughter. 9 The king’s daughter said to the mother, “Please take this baby and nurse him for me. I will pay you for doing that.” So the baby’s

mother agreed, took him, and nursed him. **10** When he had gotten bigger, his mother brought the boy to the king's daughter. She adopted him and said, "I pulled him out of the water, so I will call him Moses."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 1 Moses, on the other hand, was taking care of the sheep that belonged to Jethro (his father-in-law who was a priest to the Midianite people.) One day, he took the flock to the far side of the wildland. He came to a mountain where God would reveal himself to Moses and later to the Israelites called Horeb. 2 While he was there, Yahweh’s messenger appeared to Moses as a fire inside a bush. Moses stared at the burning bush, amazed that the fire was not burning it completely to ashes. 3 He thought, “I will go closer to see this strange thing! Why is the bush not burning up?”

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

“Yes!” Moses replied.

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

now heard the Israelites crying. I have also seen how badly the Egyptians treat them. **10** So now I will send you to do this: Go to the king of Egypt and lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 1 Moses replied to God, "They will completely disbelieve me and ignore me because they will think, 'Yahweh did not appear to you.'"

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

Moses answered, "A staff."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jethro said to Moses, “You may go. Be safe.”

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

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

really my husband by blood." **26** She said, "a husband by blood," because she had cut off their son's foreskin. So Yahweh did not harm anyone.

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

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

5 **1** Then Moses and Aaron went to the king. They said to him, "The God **named** Yahweh, whom we Israelites worship, says this to you: 'Let my people go to the desert so that they may have a feast to honor me!'"

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

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

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

5 Then the king said, "Look, there are too many Israelites in Egypt for you to encourage them to just stop working." **6** That same day the king commanded the Egyptian slave drivers and the Israelite bosses who directed the slaves, **7** "Stop giving the Israelites straw for making bricks. From now on, they will have to go get it themselves. **8** However, still force them to make the same number of bricks that they did before. Do not lower the number at all. They do

not want to work. That is why they are asking me to let them go into the wilderness to worship their god. 9 Make the men work harder so that they will be too busy to listen to lies from their leaders!"

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

15 Then the Israelite bosses went in to the palace and complained to the king, "Why are you treating us this way? 16 Your slave drivers are not giving us any straw for making bricks, but they keep telling us, 'Make the same number of bricks!' They are even beating us. But it is your own slave drivers that are keeping us from making enough bricks."

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

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

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

6 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to the king when I make
him let my people go. I will powerfully force him to chase them from his land!”

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

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

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

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

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

14 These are the original clan leaders:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 **1** Yahweh answered, “See, I am putting you in front of the king like a god, and your
brother Aaron will speak for you like a prophet. **2** You must tell everything I instruct you to
your older brother Aaron, and he will tell it all to the king. He must tell the king to let the
Israelites leave his land. **3** But I will make the king stubborn. Because of this, even though I
will do many kinds of miracles here in Egypt, **4** the king will not obey you. Then I will punish
the Egyptians very severely and will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt as an army.
5 Once I have proven how powerful I am to the Egyptians by rescuing the Israelites from
being their slaves, they will know that I am Yahweh.”

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

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

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

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

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

20 So Aaron and Moses did what Yahweh told them to do. As the king and his officials were watching, Aaron lifted up his staff and then struck the water in the Nile River with it. All the water in the river turned to blood. **21** Then all the fish in the river died. The water smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink the water from the river. All the water in Egypt was blood. **22** But the Egyptian men who did magic did the same thing using their magic. So, just as Yahweh had said, the king continued to be stubborn and would not obey what Aaron and Moses said. **23** Then the king turned and went back to his palace, and he did not think any more about it. **24** All the Egyptians dug into the ground near the Nile River to get water to drink, because they could not drink the water from the river.

25 One week passed after Yahweh struck the Nile River.

8 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go back to the king and tell him, ‘Yahweh says that you must let my people go in order that they can worship me **in the desert.** **2** But if you do not let them go, watch out! I will punish you by sending frogs to cover your country. **3** Not only will the Nile River be full of frogs, but the frogs will also come up out of the river into your house. They will come into your bedroom and onto your bed. They will be in the houses of your slaves and all the rest of your people. They will even get into your ovens and your pans for mixing the materials for baking bread. **4** The frogs will jump up on you, on the Egyptian people, and on all your slaves.’”

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

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

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

10 The king replied, “**Pray for us** tomorrow.”

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

12 Then Moses and Aaron left the king. Moses pleaded with Yahweh about the frogs he had used to punish the king. **13** Yahweh did just what Moses asked him to do. As a result, all the frogs in the houses, in their courtyards, and in their fields died. **14** The people gathered together all the dead frogs into big piles, and the land smelled very bad. **15** But when the king noticed that the frogs were gone, he made himself stubborn again. Just as Yahweh had said would happen, the king did not do what Aaron and Moses told him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 Moses said **to the king**, "Listen to me! After I leave you, I will pray to Yahweh, asking that he would cause the swarms of flies to leave you, your slaves, and the rest of your people tomorrow. But do not lie to us again by refusing to let our people go to offer sacrifices to Yahweh!" **30** Then Moses left the king and prayed to Yahweh. **31** Yahweh did what Moses asked. He got rid of the swarms of flies from around the king, his slaves, and the rest of his people. No flies remained. **32** But the king was stubborn this time also, and he did not allow the Israelites to go.

9 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go to the king and say to him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God we Hebrews worship, says: "Let my people go in order that they may worship me. **2** Otherwise, if you refuse to free them but continue to keep them **as your slaves**, **3** I warn you that I will soon powerfully punish you by sending a terrible disease on all your domesticated

animals to make them sick and die—on your horses, on your donkeys, on your camels, on your cattle, and on your flocks of sheep and goats. **4** But I, Yahweh, will treat the Israelites' domesticated animals differently than the Egyptians'. None of the Israelites' domesticated animals will die.""

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

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

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

13 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Get up early tomorrow morning. Go and stand in front of the king and tell him that Yahweh God, the one whom the Hebrew people worship, says this: 'Let my people go in order that they may worship me **in the wilderness**. **14** If you do not, then this time I am planning terrible disasters that will not only make your officials and the rest of your people very sad but also you yourself, in order that you might know that there is no god like me anywhere in the world. **15** By this time I could have powerfully struck you and your people with terrible diseases that would have destroyed your nation. **16** But I have let you live. The reason I have let you live is to show you how strong I am and so that I will be famous all over the world. **17** You are still acting proudly and refusing to let my people go. **18** So listen to

this: About this time tomorrow I will cause large balls of ice to fall in Egypt. Between the time Egypt first became a nation and today, there has never been an ice storm as bad as this one will be. **19** So you should send **a message to all people** to put under shelter **their** domesticated animals and everything else that **they** own that is out in the fields. The ice will fall on every person and every animal that is out in the fields and that is not brought under a shelter. They will all die.'"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 1 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go to the king again. I have made him and his officials stubborn. I have done so in order that I may have a good reason to do all these miracles among them. 2 I have also done so in order that you would be able to tell your children and your grandchildren how I caused the Egyptians to act very foolishly when I performed all these miracles among them. Then all of you will know that I am Yahweh."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 The king quickly called Aaron and Moses and said, “I have sinned against Yahweh, your god, and against you. **17** Can you forgive me right now for having sinned this one time? Please pray to Yahweh, your god. Just ask him to take away the locusts that will cause us all to die.”

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

21 Yahweh said to Moses, “Reach your hand up toward the sky so that it may be dark over all the land of Egypt, so dark that it will seem like people can feel it.” **22** So Moses reached his hand toward the sky, and it became extremely dark all over Egypt for three days and nights.

23 No one could see anyone else. No one went anywhere for three days. But there was light in the area where the Israelites lived.

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

25 But Moses replied, "No, you must also let us take our sacrifices and burnt offerings to offer to Yahweh, our God. **26** Our domesticated animals must also go with us. We are not going to leave one animal behind because we must take them to worship Yahweh, the God we worship. We will not know what we will need for worshiping Yahweh until we get to where we are going."

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

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

11 **1** Yahweh said to Moses, "I will bring one more disaster on the king of Egypt and on all his people. After that, he will let you leave. When he does, he will absolutely chase you out of Egypt. **2** Speak quickly to all the Israelites. Tell them to ask all their Egyptian neighbors, both men and women, to give them things made from silver and gold." **3** Yahweh made the Egyptians willing to help the Israelites. Also, the king's officials and all the rest of the people thought that Moses was one of the most important men in Egypt.

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

down before me and will say, ‘Please get out of Egypt, you and everyone who is with you!’ After that, we will leave Egypt!” When Moses had said that, he left the king very angrily.

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

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

12 **1** Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses in Egypt, **2** “Start counting your months at this new moon. It will be the Israelites’ first month of the year. **3** Tell the whole Israelite community, ‘On the tenth day of this month every man who leads a family must take a young sheep or a young goat for his household. **4** If there are not enough people in his family to eat a whole cooked lamb, then his family and a family that lives nearby may kill one animal. Plan to share the lamb according to the number of people in each family and according to how much each person can eat. **5** You may choose a sheep or a goat; but it must be a one-year-old male, and it must be perfect, without any defects. **6** You must take special care of these animals until the fourteenth day of this month. On that day, all the Israelites must kill the young sheep or young goats in the evening. **7** Then they must take some of the blood from the young sheep or young goats, and they must smear it on the two doorposts and on the tops of the doorframes of the houses in which they will eat the meat. **8** They must roast the animals over a fire and eat the meat that same night. They must eat it with bitter herbs and with bread that does not have yeast in it. **9** You must not eat any of the meat uncooked, and you must not cook the meat in water. You must do this: cook the whole animal over a fire. Do not remove the head, legs, or inside parts. **10** Do not save any of the meat until the next morning. Any meat that you have not eaten by morning, you must burn to ash. **11** When you eat it, you must be dressed ready to travel. You must have your sandals on your feet and your walking staff in your hands. You must eat it hurriedly. It will be a festival called Passover to honor me, Yahweh.

12 On that night I will go throughout Egypt, and I will kill all the oldest males in Egypt, both humans and animals. I am punishing all the Egyptians’ gods. I am Yahweh. **13** The blood on your houses will show that you are obeying me. When I see the blood, I will go past those

houses. I will not harm the people who are in those houses when I come to punish the Egyptians.

14 You will make this day a feast to remember and celebrate what I, Yahweh, will have done for you. This is a rule for you: every generation of Israelites must celebrate this annual feast for all of time. **15** For seven days you must eat bread that has no yeast in it. On the first day of that week, you must remove all the yeast that is in your houses. During those seven days, if anyone eats bread that has yeast in it, you must drive that person out from your people. **16** On the first day of that week, you must have a holy meeting. You must do the same thing on the seventh day. People must not work at all on those two days. The only work you may do is to prepare food to eat.

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

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

24 You and your descendants must celebrate this ritual forever; this is a law. **25** When you arrive in the land that Yahweh will give to you as he promised, you must keep celebrating this ritual every year. **26** When your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean?' **27** you must

tell them, ‘This ritual is to remember how your ancestors sacrificed lambs on the night that Yahweh’s angel passed over the houses of the Israelites when they were in Egypt. He killed the oldest males in all the Egyptian houses, but he did not kill the sons in our houses.’” After Moses told them this, the elders all bowed their heads and worshiped Yahweh. **28** Then the Israelites did exactly what Yahweh told Moses and Aaron to tell them to do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

48 When someone from another country comes to live with you and wants to celebrate
Yahweh's Passover festival, circumcise all the males in his household. Then he can eat the
Passover meal, and you should treat that man as though he had been born an Israelite. But do
not allow men who are not circumcised to eat the Passover meal. 49 These rules apply to
people who were born as Israelites and to foreigners who come and live among you."

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

13 1 Yahweh said to Moses, 2 "Consecrate all the firstborn **males** in order that they may
belong to me. The firstborn **males** of **the Israelite** people and of **their** animals will be mine."

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

seventh day, you must have a celebration to honor Yahweh. **7** Do not eat bread that has yeast in it for seven days. You should not have any yeast or bread made with yeast anywhere in your land.

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 1 Then Yahweh said to Moses, 2 “Tell the Israelites to turn toward Pi Hahiroth and camp near it. That place is between Migdol and the Red Sea, near Baal Zephon. Set up your tents there, close to the sea. 3 When the king knows you have done that, he will think, ‘The Israelites are lost. They are wandering around, and the desert blocks their path.’ 4 I will make the king stubborn again and he will chase you with his army. Then people will revere me more than the king and his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh.” So Moses told the Israelites that, and they did what he told them to do.

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

10 When the king’s army got near, the Israelite people were surprised to see that the Egyptians were marching toward them. They were terrified, so they cried out to Yahweh to help them. 11 Then they said to Moses, “You have not helped us by bringing us out of Egypt. Pharaoh’s army is going to kill us here in the wilderness. If we had stayed in Egypt, someone

would have buried us in graves. **12** That is what we told you when we were in Egypt. We said, ‘Leave us alone, and let us work for the Egyptians.’ It would have been better for us to be slaves for the Egyptians than to die here in the desert!”

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

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

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

23 Then the Egyptian army went after them into the middle of the sea with their horses, chariots, and horsemen. **24** Just before dawn, Yahweh looked down from the fiery cloud, and then he caused the Egyptian army to panic. **25** He caused the wheels of the chariots to get stuck in the ground so that they could hardly move. So the Egyptians said, “Yahweh is fighting for the Israelites against us; we must escape from them!”

26 Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Stretch out your arm over the sea. Then the water will
come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and their horsemen.” **27** So Moses stretched out
his arm above the sea, and the water returned to its normal level just before dawn. The
Egyptians tried to escape, but Yahweh hurled them back into the sea. **28** The water returned
and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and the whole Egyptian army that had tried to follow
the Israelites into the sea. Every one of the Egyptians died.

29 But the Israelites had already crossed through the sea by walking on dry ground. The
water was like two walls, one on the right side and one on the left side. **30** That is the way
Yahweh saved the Israelites from the Egyptian army on that day. The Israelites saw the
Egyptians lying dead. Their bodies washed up on the shore. **31** The Israelites saw what
Yahweh powerfully did to the Egyptians, and they revered Yahweh. They trusted Yahweh and
his servant Moses.

15 **1** Then Moses and all the Israelites sang this song to Yahweh. They each sang,

“I will sing to Yahweh because he has won a great victory;
He has thrown the horses and the charioteers into the sea!
2 Yahweh makes me strong, and I will sing about him.
He has saved me.
He is my God, and I will celebrate **because of what he did for me**.
He was my father’s God, and I will tell others how great he is.
3 Yahweh is a warrior;
Yahweh is his name.
4 He has thrown the king’s chariots and his army into the sea;
The king’s best officers all drowned in the Sea of Reeds.
5 The deep water covered them;
they sank to the bottom like a rock.
6 O Yahweh, your power is immense;
with that power, O Yahweh, you have crushed the enemy into pieces.
7 You use your great strength to defeat your enemies.
When you are angry, you destroy them

like a fire burns up straw.

8 You blew on the sea, and the water piled up high;
the water became like mounds of dirt.
In the deepest part of the sea, the water became thick, as though it were frozen.

9 Our enemies said,
'We will go after them
and catch up to them.
We will do whatever we want to them!
We will draw our swords
and defeat them;
then we will divide up everything we take from them.'

10 Your wind blew,
and then the sea covered them.
They sank like lead in the big waves.

11 Yahweh, there is no other god like you!
There is no one like you!
You are wonderfully different from everything else.
Everyone fears and praises you for all the miracles you do!

12 You used your power
to make the earth open and our enemies go down into it!

13 You are leading the people you bought because you always love us;
Because **you use** your strength **for our good**, you are guiding us to the home that you set apart.

14 The people of other nations will hear what you have done,
and they will tremble.
The people in Philistia will be terrified.

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

16 They will be terrified and fearful because of your great strength.
But they will be as silent as stones

until we, your people, march past them,
the people you freed **from being slaves in Egypt.**
17 You will bring us **into the promised land of Canaan.**
You will enable us to live on your hill,
in the place that you, Yahweh, have chosen to be your home,
in the holy place, our Lord,
that you yourself will build.
18 O Yahweh, you will rule forever!"

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

" Sing to Yahweh because he has triumphed gloriously over his enemies.

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

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

27 After they left Marah, they came to an oasis named Elim. There were 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees there. So they camped there.

16 **1** They left Elim, and all the Israelite people came to the wilderness of Sin between
Elim and Sinai Mountain. That was on the fifteenth day of the second month after they left
Egypt. **2** There in the wilderness, the Israelite people complained against Moses and Aaron.
3 They said to them, "We wish that Yahweh had killed us in Egypt! There we had meat to cook
and all the bread that we wanted to eat. But you have brought us into this desert in order that
we will all starve until we die!"

4 Yahweh said to Moses, "Watch what I am going to do. I am going to send bread from the
sky for you. When I do that, the people must go out of their tents every day and gather enough
to eat on that day. When I do that, I will find out whether they will obey me or not. **5** On the
sixth day **of each week**, they should gather and prepare twice as much as on the other days **so
they do not have to gather any on the seventh day**."

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelite people, "This evening you will know that it
was Yahweh**, not us,** who brought you out of Egypt. **7** In the morning you will see how great
Yahweh is, because he has heard how you have complained against him. We are not important
enough for your complaints." **8** Then Moses also said, "Each evening Yahweh will give you
meat to eat, and each morning he will give you enough bread to make you full. He has heard
how you have complained about him. We are unimportant; when you complain, it is really
about Yahweh, not us."

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Tell all the Israelite people, 'Come and stand here in the
presence of Yahweh, because he has heard what you have been complaining about.'" **10** So as
Aaron told the Israelites that, they turned to look toward the desert and were surprised to see
the dazzling light of Yahweh in the cloud **that had been leading them**.

11 Then Yahweh said to Moses, **12** "I have heard what the Israelites have been
complaining about. So say to them, 'At twilight, you will have meat to eat, and in the morning
you will have bread. You will have all you want of it to eat. Then you will know that I am
Yahweh, your God.'"

13 That evening quails appeared, and there were so many that they covered the campsite.
The next morning there were small drops of water all around the campsite. **14** When the water

on the ground dried up, they saw a thin layer of something that looked like small white flakes on the desert ground. It looked like a thin layer of ice on the ground. **15** When the Israelites saw it, they did not know what it was, so they said to each other, “What is it?”

Moses replied to them, “It is the food Yahweh has given you to eat. **16** This is what Yahweh has commanded: Each of you should gather as much as you need to eat. Gather two liters for each person who lives in your tents.” **17** So that is what the Israelite people did. Some gathered more and some gathered less. **18** Because they gathered two liters per person, when they measured what they had gathered, those who had gathered a lot did not have anything left over. Those who had gathered less still had enough to eat. Each person gathered just enough.

19 Moses said to them, “Do not leave any of it to eat tomorrow morning!” **20** Some of them did not obey what Moses said. They kept some of it until the next morning. However, it was full of maggots and smelled rotten. That made Moses angry. **21** Each morning they gathered as much as they needed. Later, when the sun got hot, what was left on the ground melted.

22 On the sixth day, each person was able to gather four liters of bread, which was twice as much as they gathered on the other days. When the leaders of the people came to Moses and told him about that, **23** Moses said to them, “This is what Yahweh has told you: Tomorrow will be a day for you to rest. It will be a day set apart for Yahweh. So today, bake or boil what you will need for today and for tomorrow. Whatever is left this evening, you should put aside and keep it to eat tomorrow.”

24 So they did what Moses told them. What was left over, they kept until the next day. It did not spoil and did not get maggots in it! **25** On that day, Moses said, “Eat today what you have saved from yesterday because today is a day of rest to Yahweh. Today you will not find any of that food outside. **26** Every week, you must gather it for six days; but on the seventh day, which will be a day of rest for you, there will not be any to gather.”

27 On the seventh day, some of the people went outside their tents to gather some of that food, but could not find any. **28** Then Yahweh told Moses to say this to the people: “Yahweh is angry because for a long time you people have refused to do all the things that he has told you to do! **29** Listen! Since Yahweh has given you a day of rest, on the sixth day of each week, he

will therefore be giving you enough of this food for two days. Each of you should stay in his tent, not going anywhere on the seventh day!" **30** So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 The Israelites called this food "manna." It looked white, like the color of coriander seeds, and it tasted like thin wafers made with honey. **32** Moses said, "This is what Yahweh has told you: 'You must keep two liters of it for all future generations so that they can see the food that I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt.'"

33 And he said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put two liters of manna in it. Then put it in a place where Yahweh can see it. You must keep it like that for all future generations." **34** Later Aaron would put the jar in front of the record of the agreement between Yahweh and Israel in order to keep the manna as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **35** The Israelites ate manna every day for forty years until they came to where there were people, at the border of the land of Canaan. **36** Now two liters is called an omer, which is a tenth of an ephah.

17 **1** Then Yahweh commanded all the Israelites to travel from the wilderness of Sin and camp at a place called Rephidim, and they did. However, there was no water there for the people to drink. **2** So the people complained to Moses again, saying, "Give us water to drink!"

Moses replied to them, "You should not quarrel with me! You should not test Yahweh!"

3 But the people were very thirsty, and they continued to complain to Moses. They were saying, "You only brought us out here to kill us and our children and cattle by not letting us have any water to drink!"

4 So Moses prayed to Yahweh. He said, "How shall I deal with these people? They are almost ready to kill me by throwing stones at me!"

5 Yahweh said to Moses, "Lead the people and walk in front of them. Take some of the elders of the Israelite people with you. Carry in your hand the staff you used to strike the Nile River. **6** Watch me! I will stand in front of you on top of a large rock at the foot of Mount Sinai. Strike the rock with your stick. When you do that, water for the people to drink will flow out of the rock." Moses did what God had said, and the elders saw it happen. **7** Moses named

that place both Masseh (because the Israelites tested Yahweh by questioning if he was really able to help them or not) and Meribah (because they were complaining all the time to him).

8 Then the people of Amalek came and fought against the Israelite people at Rephidim.
9 Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men to go out and fight against the people of Amalek tomorrow. I will stand on the top of the hill, holding the staff that God told me to carry." **10** So Joshua obeyed Moses. He **took some men** to fight against the people of Amalek.

While they were fighting, Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill **so that they could see the whole battle area**. **11** Then this happened: Whenever Moses lifted up his arms, the Israelite men started to win the battle; whenever he lowered his arms, the Amalekite army started to win. **12** But Moses' arms became tired. So Aaron and Hur brought a large stone for him to sit on. While he was sitting on it, those two held up his arms, one man on either side of him. In that way, they kept his arms lifted up until the sun went down. **13** In this way Joshua and the men with him defeated the Amalekite king and his army in battle.

14 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Write an account of this battle and then read it to Joshua. Also write that I will so completely destroy the people of Amalek that no one in the world will remember who they were." **15** Then Moses built a stone altar there and named it "Yahweh is my flag." **16** He said, "Because they fought against him, Yahweh will fight against the people of Amalek forever!"

18 **1** Jethro, who was the priest for the people of Midian, and who was also Moses' father-in-law, heard about all that God had done for Moses and for God's people, the Israelites. He heard about how Yahweh had brought them out of Egypt. **2** Moses had sent his wife Zipporah **and his two sons** back home **when he was returning to Egypt**. So when Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to him, he brought her **3** and her sons. One son's name was Gershom, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "foreigner," because Moses had said, "I have been a foreigner living in another land." **4** Her other son's name was Eliezer, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "God helps me," because Moses had said, "God, whom my father worshiped, has helped me and saved me from the king of Egypt killing me."

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

9 Jethro praised Yahweh when he heard that Yahweh had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and had been very good to them. **10** He said, "Praise Yahweh, who has rescued you from the powerful Egyptian **army** and from the powerful Egyptian king and has set the Israelites free from the control of the Egyptians! **11** Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all other gods, because he rescued the Israelites from their proud enemies." **12** Then Jethro (who was Moses' father-in-law) brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices for God. Aaron and the Israelite elders came and ate a meal with Moses' father-in-law to honor God.

13 The next day, Moses sat down at the place where he settled disputes among the people. The people asked Moses to judge their disputes from the morning until the evening. **14** When Jethro saw everything that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "Do not lead the people this way. You should not sit here alone letting everyone demand that you judge for them all day!"

15 Moses replied to his father-in-law, "I am doing this because the people keep coming to me to find out what God desires. **16** When they cannot agree about something, they come to me, and they ask me to decide which of them is right. When I decide, I also explain to them how God's laws and instructions apply in that situation."

17 Jethro said to him, "What you are doing is not beneficial. **18** You and these people will wear yourselves out! This work is too much for you. You are not able to do it by yourself. **19** Now listen to what I will tell you to do. If you do what I suggest, God will help you. You should continue to represent the people to God and tell him about the people's disputes.

20 You should also teach them God's law and instructions. You should also explain to them how they should act and the things that they should do. **21** In addition, you should find some capable Israelite men to help you. Choose men who respect God, who are trustworthy, and who will not accept bribes. Appoint some of them to make decisions for groups of ten people, some for groups of fifty people, some for groups of a hundred people, and some for groups of a thousand people. **22** Allow them to settle disputes for the people usually. It should work like this: The difficult matters they can bring to you, but the matters that are simple, they can decide themselves. Do this to make the work easier for you as they help you do that work. **23** If you do that, you will be able to continue doing what God commands, and all the people will be able to live peacefully with each other."

24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that Jethro told him. **25** Then Moses chose capable men from among the Israelite people and made them chiefs over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. **26** They usually settled disputes for the people. They brought the difficult cases to Moses, but they decided the simple cases by themselves.

27 Then Moses said goodbye to his father-in-law, and Jethro returned home.

19 **1** On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. **2** After they left Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and they set up their tents at the base of the mountain.

3 Moses climbed up **the mountain to talk** with God. Yahweh called to him from **the top** of the mountain and said, "This is what I want you to say to the Israelite people, the descendants of Jacob, **4** 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You have seen what I did for you and how I brought you here to me as if I had carried you on top of eagles' wings. **5** Therefore, if you very carefully do what I tell you to do and obey all that I require in what we agreed by swearing to, you will be my own people. You will be my personal property from among all of the nations. Although all the earth is mine, **6** you will be my priestly kingdom and a nation dedicated to me.' That is what you must tell the Israelites."

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

9 Then Yahweh said to Moses “Listen carefully. I will come to you from inside a thick
cloud. When I am speaking to you, the people will hear it, and they will always believe that
you are their leader.” Then Moses told Yahweh what the people said.

10 Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go back down to the people again. **Tell them to get ready
for my coming.** They must purify themselves today and tomorrow. They must also wash their
clothes 11 so they will be ready on the third day. On that day I will come down to Mount Sinai
to where all the people can see me. 12 You must make a boundary around the base of the
mountain to protect the people. Tell them, ‘Be sure that you do not climb the mountain or even
touch it. You must kill anyone who touches the base of the mountain. 13 Do not let anyone
touch any person or any animal that touches the mountain. Therefore, you must kill any person
or animal that touches the mountain by throwing stones at it or shooting it with arrows.’ But
when you hear a long, loud trumpet sound, the people can come close to the base of the
mountain.”

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

16 On the third day, during the morning, there was thunder, lightning, a very dark cloud on
the mountain, and a very loud horn sound. The people in the camp shook because they were
very afraid. 17 Then Moses led the people outside the camp to meet with God. They stood
around the base of the mountain. 18 Then Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai, surrounded by
fire. That caused the entire mountain to smoke. The smoke rose up like the smoke from the
chimney of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. 19 As the sound of the horn
continued to become louder, Moses spoke to God, and God answered him in a thunderous
voice.

20 Then Yahweh came down again onto the top of Mount Sinai, and he summoned Moses
to come up to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up. **21** Yahweh said to Moses, "Go
down again and warn the people not to cross the boundary in order to look at me. If they do
that, many of them will die. **22** Also, the priests who come near me must purify themselves. If
they do not do that, I will punish them."

23 Then Moses said to Yahweh, "The people will not climb the mountain because you
commanded them, saying, 'Set a boundary around the mountain, to consecrate it.'"

24 Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down the mountain and bring Aaron back up with you. But
do not allow the priests or other people to cross the boundary to come up to me. If they cross it,
I will punish them." **25** So Moses went down the mountain again and told the people what
Yahweh had said.

20 **1** Then God spoke these words to the Israelites. **2** "I am Yahweh your God, the one you
worship. I am the one who brought you out of the land of Egypt. I am the one who freed you
from being slaves there. **3** Do not worship any god other than me.

4 Do not carve yourself a figure that looks like anything in the sky or that is on the ground
or that is in the water under the ground. **5** Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because
I am Yahweh your God. I demand that you worship me only! I will punish the descendants of
those who hate me. I will punish their descendants for three, even four generations.
6 However, I will faithfully love thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my
commandments.

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

8 Remember that the seventh day of every week belongs to me. **9** There are six days each
week for you to do all your work. **10** But the seventh day is a day of rest, a day dedicated to
me, Yahweh your God. On that day you must not do any work. Neither you nor your sons, your
daughters, your male or female slaves, your livestock, and not even foreigners who are living
in your country may work. **11** Do this because I, Yahweh, created the sky, the earth, the ocean,

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

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

13 Do not murder anyone.

14 Do not commit adultery with anyone.

15 Do not steal anything.

16 Do not falsely accuse anyone of committing a crime.

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

18 When the people heard the thunder and saw the lightning, and when they heard the sound of the horn and saw the smoke on the mountain, they were afraid and trembled. They stood a safe distance away **19** and said to Moses, "You talk to us! We will listen! But do not let God speak to us anymore. We are afraid that if he speaks anymore to us, we will die."

20 Moses replied to the people, "Do not be afraid! God has come to observe how you will behave. He wants you to honor him and to not sin."

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

22 Yahweh said to Moses, "Say this to the Israelite people, 'You have heard how I, Yahweh, have spoken to you from heaven. **23** Therefore, do not make any gods of silver or gold that you will worship instead of me. **24** Make an altar out of earth for me. Sacrifice your burnt offerings on it, your offerings to promise friendship with me, and also your sheep and oxen. Worship me in any place that I choose for you to honor me; if you do that, I will come to you and bless you. **25** If you build an altar for me out of stone, do not cut the stones because

the cutting tool will profane the altar. **26** Do not climb steps to my altar so that no one may see your genitals.'

21 **1** These are the laws that you must establish for the Israelite nation:

2 When you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve you for only six years. In the seventh year you must free him from being your slave, and he does not have to pay you anything for setting him free. **3** If he became your slave alone, you will free him alone. But if he had a wife, you must free both him and his wife. **4** If the master of a slave gives him a wife, and she gives birth to sons or daughters while her husband is a slave, you only have to free the man. His wife and children will continue to be slaves of their master. **5** But when it is time for you to free the slave if he clearly states: 'I love my master and my wife and my children, and I do not want to go free,' **6** then his master must take him to the place where they worship God. There he must make the slave stand against the door or the doorpost. Then the master will use an awl to make a hole in the slave's ear and he will own that slave for the rest of his life.

7 If a man sells his daughter to become a slave, she should not go free like the male slaves. **8** If the man who bought her wanted her to be his concubine, but later he is not pleased with her, he must sell her back to her father. He must not sell her to a foreigner, because that was not what he and the girl's father agreed to. **9** If the man who buys her wants her to be a wife for his son, he must then treat her as though she were his own daughter. **10** If the master marries another woman, he must continue to give the first woman the same amount of food, clothing, and sexual attention that he gave to her before. **11** If he does not do these three things for her, he must free her from being a slave, and she is not required to pay anything to go free.

12 If someone hits a man in order to kill him and the man dies, then you absolutely must execute the murderer; **13** but if he did not plan the murder—if God allowed the accident—the one who hit him can escape to a place that I will choose for you, and he will be safe there. **14** But if someone gets angry with another person and kills him on purpose, you must kill the murderer even if he runs to God's altar.

15 You must kill anyone who strikes his father or mother.

16 You must kill anyone who kidnaps another person, whether he sold the person or you found him still with the kidnapper.

17 You must kill anyone who curses or insults his father or his mother.

18 Suppose two people fight, and one hits the other with a stone or his fist. Suppose the person he strikes does not die but is injured and has to stay in bed for a while, **19** but later he is able to walk outside using a cane. Then they must not punish the person who hit him, except that they must make him pay the injured person the money he could not earn while he was recovering as well as the costs for healing.

20 If someone hits his male or female slave with a stick, and if the slave dies from the blow, then you must avenge the slave's death. **21** But if the slave recovers after a few days, you must not punish the one who hit him, because the slave was his property.

22 If some men are fighting, and they hit a pregnant woman so that she gives birth, but she and the baby are unharmed, whoever hit her must pay a fine. He must pay whatever the woman's husband asks after a judge approves of the fine. **23** But if he harmed anyone **you must punish him by causing the same harm to him**. If he killed someone, you must kill him. **24** **In the same way, if he harmed** an eye, a tooth, a hand, or a foot, **25** or caused a burn, a wound, or a bruise—**you must cause the same harm to him**.

26 If the owner of a slave strikes the eye of his male or female slave and that eye becomes blind, then he must free that slave because of what he did to the slave's eye. **27** If someone knocks out one of his slave's teeth, he must free the slave because of what he did to the slave's tooth.

28 If a bull gores a man or woman with the result that the person dies, you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, but do not eat it. The owner of the bull is not guilty. **29** But if the bull had attacked people several times before and if people had told its owner about that, but he did not keep the bull inside a fence, and it kills a man or woman by goring, then you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, and you must also kill its owner. **30** However, if **the family of the dead** chooses to demand compensation instead, to save his life he must pay the full amount they demand. **31** If someone's bull attacks and gores someone's son or daughter, you must treat

the bull's owner according to that same rule. 32 If a bull attacks and gores a male or female slave, its owner must pay to the slave's owner thirty pieces of silver, and you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it.

33 Suppose someone uncovers a hole for storing water or digs one and does not cover it. If someone's bull or donkey falls into it and dies, 34 the owner of the pit must give the animal's owner as much money as the animal was worth, but then he will own the dead animal.

35 If someone's bull hurts another person's bull, so that it dies, the owners of both bulls must sell the bull that is living, and they must divide between them the money that they get for it. They must also divide between them the meat of the animal that died. 36 However, if the owner knew that the bull often attacked other animals before, and he did not secure it, then the owner of that bull must give the owner of the bull that died a living bull, but then he will own the dead animal.

22 1 If someone steals a bull or a sheep and then kills it or sells it, he must give the owner five bulls or cows for the bull that he stole, and he must give the owner four sheep or goats for the sheep that he stole.

2 If someone finds a thief breaking into his house at night and hits him and the thief dies, he is not guilty of murder. 3 But if that happens during the daytime, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murdering him.

A thief must pay for what he stole. If he has nothing with which to pay for what he stole, the judges must sell him to become a slave, and the money from his sale will pay for what he stole. 4 In a case where you catch a thief and he still has the stolen goods, if it is a bull or a donkey or a sheep, and it is still alive, the thief must pay back the stolen animal as well as another one of the same kind.

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

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

7 Suppose that someone gives another person some money or other items and asks him to keep it in his house for a while. And suppose that a thief steals it from that person's house. If you catch the thief, the thief must pay back twice as much as he stole. **8** But if no one catches the thief, you must bring the owner of the house to God so he **can swear** that he did not take his neighbor's property. **9** Whenever someone claims his neighbor wronged him and says, 'This is actually mine,' about a bull, a donkey, a sheep, clothing, or something else he lost, they must both come and stand before God. The one whom God says is wrong must pay back the owner twice as much as he took.

10 Suppose someone gives his donkey or bull or sheep or some other animal to someone else and asks him to take care of it for a while. However, the animal dies, or something injures it or takes it away while no one is watching. **11** Then the person who was taking care of the animal must swear, knowing that Yahweh is listening, that he did not steal the item. The owner of the animal must accept that the other person is telling the truth, and the other person will not have to pay anything back to the owner. **12** But if someone stole the animal while he was supposed to be taking care of it, the man who promised to take care of it must pay back the owner for the animal. **13** If wild animals mauled the animal, he must bring back its remains to prove that what he says is true. If he does that, he will not have to pay anything for the mauled animal.

14 If someone borrows an animal from his neighbor, and if something hurts or kills that animal when its owner is not there, the one who borrowed it must pay the owner for the animal. **15** But if that happens when the owner of the animal is there, the one who borrowed it will not have to pay back anything. If someone rented it, the money that he paid to rent it will be enough to pay for the animal dying or for an injury.

16 If a man tricks a virgin girl whose **father** has not yet promised her to be anyone's bride into having sexual intercourse with him, he must pay the bride price for her and marry her. **17** But if her father does not allow her to marry him, he must still pay the girl's father as much money as men pay to marry a virgin.

18 You must kill any woman who practices sorcery.

19 You must kill any person who has sexual intercourse with an animal.

20 You must kill anyone who offers a sacrifice to any god other than Yahweh.

21 You must not abuse or subjugate foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

22 You must not mistreat any widow or any orphan. **23** If you mistreat them and they ask me to help them, I will help them. **24** Because I will be angry with you, I will cause you to die in war. Your wives will become widows, and your children will become orphans.

25 If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a moneylender by requiring him to pay interest on the money. **26** If you make him give you his cloak to guarantee that he will pay the money back, you must give the cloak back to him before the sun goes down, **27** because his cloak is the only thing he has to cover his body when he sleeps. When he complains about you to me, I will help him because I am merciful.

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

29 Do not withhold from me the best parts of the grain that you harvest or of the olive oil or the wine that you produce.

You will give your firstborn sons to me. **30** Similarly, your firstborn male cattle and sheep belong to me. After those animals are born, allow them to stay with their mothers for seven days. On the eighth day you will give them to me.

31 You are my set apart people, so do not eat any meat from any animal that a wild animal killed. Instead, throw it where the dogs can eat it.

23

1 Do not speak falsely in court. Do not help an evil man by testifying maliciously.

2 Do not join a group of people who are planning to do something evil. Do not tell the same lies they do and so keep the judge from deciding the case justly. **3** Do not prefer someone in court just because he is poor.

4 If you see someone's bull or donkey when it is wandering away loose, take it back to its owner even if the owner is your enemy. **5** If you see someone's donkey that has fallen down because of its heavy load, help the owner to get the donkey up again even if he is someone who hates you. Do not just walk away without helping him.

6 Decide the cases of poor people who are on trial as fairly as you judge the cases of other people. **7** Do not deceive others. Do not kill guiltless or upright people, because I will not say that evil people are good. **8** Do not accept a bribe, because good judges who take bribes do not judge wisely, and they unfairly judge against the person who is right.

9 Do not mistreat foreigners who live among you. You know how foreigners often feel, because you lived as foreigners in Egypt.

10 For six years, plant seeds in your ground and gather the harvest. **11** But in the seventh year you must leave the ground fallow. Allow your poor countrymen to eat **what grows on its own**. Whatever is left over is for the wild animals to eat. Do the same thing with your grapevine and your olive trees.

12 You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day you must rest and not work. Do this so that your ox and donkey may rest. The rest day will also let your slaves and the foreigners who live among you recuperate.

13 Make certain that you obey everything that I have commanded you to do. Do not pray to other gods. Do not even mention their names.

14 Every year you must travel to three celebrations to honor me:

15 Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread the way that I commanded you: eat unleavened bread for seven days in the month called Aviv. I set this time because it is the month when you left Egypt. Always bring me an offering when you come to worship me.

16 **The second celebration is the Spring** Harvest Celebration. **During that celebration you must offer to me** the first parts of your crops that grow from the seeds that you planted.

The third celebration is the Finished Harvest Celebration. That will be at the end of the year, after you finish harvesting everything you planted.

17 These three times every year, all the men must gather together to worship me, the Lord Yahweh.

18 Do not sacrifice bread you made with yeast along with blood from an animal sacrifice. Do not keep the fat from the animals you sacrificed at my celebration until the next morning. Burn it completely. 19 Each year, when you harvest your crops, take the best of what you harvest first, go to the place where you worship me, and give it to me, Yahweh your God. When you kill a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk.

20 Look! I am going to send an angel ahead of you to guard you as you travel and to lead you to the place that I have made ready for you. 21 Respect and obey him. Do not make him angry, because he will not forgive your sin, because my authority and presence is in him. 22 But if you obey his commands well and if you do all that I tell you to do, I will fight against all of your enemies and adversaries. 23 Then my angel will go ahead of you and will take you to where the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites live, and I will completely get rid of them. 24 Do not bow down before their gods or worship them. Do not do the things that they think that their gods want them to do. Instead, destroy their gods and smash to pieces their sacred stones.

25 You must worship me, Yahweh your God. If you do that, I will bless your food and water, and I will protect you from becoming sick. 26 No women in your land will have miscarriages, and no women will be unable to become pregnant. I will enable you to live a long time.

27 I will go ahead of you and terrify and confuse all the people into whose lands you are going. When you fight your enemies, I will make them run away from you. 28 I will send wasps ahead of you who will drive the Hivites, Canaanites, and the Hittites from your land. 29 I will not remove all of them in less than one year. If I did that, your land would become deserted, and there would be very many wild animals that would attack you. 30 I will remove those people groups slowly, a few at a time, until the number of your people increases and you are able to live everywhere in the land. 31 I will make your country's borders be from the Sea of Reeds in the southeast to the sea by the Philistines in the northwest, and from the wilderness in the southwest to the Euphrates River in the northeast of the country. I will give you the power

to remove the people who live there, so that you will remove them as you occupy more of the country.

32 You must not make any agreement with those people or with their gods. **33** Do not allow those people to live in your land, so they do not cause you to sin against me by enticing you to worship their gods."

24 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses. "Come up to me **on top of this mountain**, you and Aaron and **his sons** Nadab and Abihu. Also take along seventy of the Israelite elders. You will all worship me at an **appropriate** distance. **2** Moses, you will come near to me alone. The others must not come near, and the rest of the people must not come up the mountain with you."

3 Moses went and told the people everything that Yahweh had said and all that he had commanded. The people all replied together, saying, "We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do." **4** Then Moses wrote down everything that Yahweh had commanded. Moses woke early the next morning and built an altar at the bottom of the mountain. He also set up twelve stones, one for each of the Israelite tribes. **5** Then he sent some young Israelite men to burn sacrifices to Yahweh and to sacrifice some bulls as offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. **6** Moses took half of the blood of the animals that they slaughtered and put it in bowls. The other half of the blood he threw against the altar. **7** Then he loudly read the scroll on which he had written everything that Yahweh and the people were promising each other so all the people could hear it. Then all the people said, "We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do. We will obey everything."

8 Then Moses took the blood **that was in the bowls** and threw it on the people. He said, "This is the blood that confirms what Yahweh is agreeing with you—what you just heard and agreed to."

9 Then Moses and Aaron along with Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy Israelite elders went up **the mountain**, **10** and they saw God, the one whom the Israelites worship. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of blue stones called sapphires. They were as clear as the sky is when there are no clouds. **11** God did not harm those Israelite elders **even though they saw him**. They saw God, and they ate and drank together.

12 Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Come up to me on top of this mountain and wait there. I
will give you stone slabs, my law, and my commandments, all of which I have written so that
you may teach them to the people.”

13 Then Moses started out with his assistant Joshua. He went part of the way up the
mountain where God was. 14 Moses told the elders, “Stay here until we return. Do not forget
that Aaron and Hur will be with you, so if anyone disputes with his neighbor while I am gone, he
can go to them and they will judge it.”

15 Then Moses went the rest of the way up the mountain, and the cloud covered the
mountain. 16 Yahweh’s glory came down onto the mountain and the cloud covered it for six
days. On the seventh day, Yahweh called to Moses from the middle of the cloud. 17 To the
Israelites, Yahweh’s glory looked like a fire consuming the top of the mountain. 18 Moses
went into the cloud on top of the mountain and was there for 40 days and nights.

25 1 Yahweh said to Moses, 2 “Tell the Israelites that everyone who wants to may give a
gift to me. You will receive their gifts for me. 3 These are the types of gifts that you should
collect from them: gold, silver, bronze, 4 cloth dyed blue, cloth dyed purple, cloth dyed bright
red, fine linen, cloth made from goats’ hair, 5 red ram skins, fine leather hides, the hard wood
from acacia trees, 6 olive oil to burn in the lamps, spices to mix with the olive oil for anointing
the priests, and spices to mix into the sweet-smelling incense, 7 onyx stones and other
expensive stones for fastening to the priest’s sacred apron and for putting on the chest pouch
that attaches to the apron.

8 The people should make a holy place for me so that I can live in it among them. 9 They
must make my pavilion and all the things that they will use inside it precisely according to the
plan that I will show you.

10 Have the people make a sacred chest from acacia wood. They should make it 125
centimeters long, 75 centimeters wide and 75 centimeters high. 11 Cover the chest with pure
gold inside and outside and put a gold molding all around it. 12 Make four rings from gold,
and fasten them to the four legs of the chest. Put two of the rings on each side of the chest.

13 Make two poles from acacia wood, and cover them with gold. 14 Put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest so that the Levites can carry the chest by the poles. 15 Always leave the poles in the chest's rings; do not take the poles out of the rings. 16 Put the stone slabs, which I am giving you and on which I wrote my commands, inside the chest.

17 You must make a lid for the chest from pure gold. It will be 125 centimeters long and 75 centimeters wide. 18 Hammer the gold at both ends of the lid into the form of two creatures that have wings. 19 Make the winged creatures from the gold at each end of the sacred chest's lid, one at one end and the other at the other end. 20 The creature's wings should spread out and reach up to cover the lid. They should face each other, facing the chest's lid that is between them. 21 Put the stone slabs that I am giving you inside the sacred chest. Then place the lid onto the top of the chest. 22 I will set times to talk with you there. I will tell to you all my commands that you must command the Israelites from above the sacred chest's lid, between the two winged creatures which are above the sacred chest that contains my law tablets.

23 Make a table from acacia wood. It is to be one meter long, one-half of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high. 24 Cover the table with pure gold and put a gold molding all around it. 25 Make a rim all around it, eight centimeters wide, and make a gold molding around the rim. 26 Make four rings from gold. Fasten them to the four corners of the table. Each ring should be close to each table leg 27 near the rim. They are to hold poles for carrying the table. 28 Make two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. Use them to carry the table. 29 Also make dishes, cups, jars, and bowls for the priests to use to pour out wine to offer to me. Make them all from pure gold. 30 Present the sacred bread to me on the table at all times.

31 Make a lampstand from pure gold. Hammer one large lump of gold to make its base and its shaft. Make the cups, with the flower buds and petals that decorate them, from that same lump. 32 There are to be six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. 33 Each branch will have three gold cups that look like almond flowers on it. The flowers will have buds and petals. Do this for all six branches of the lampstand. 34 On the shaft of the lampstand there are to be four cups that also look like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and petals. 35 Make one flower bud beneath every two branches. Attach it to each pair of

branches as if they are growing from it. Make all six lampstand branches like this. 36 Hammer all these buds and branches, along with the shaft, from one large lump of pure gold. 37 Make seven lamps and place them on the lampstand so that its light shines all around it. 38 Make tongs from pure gold, to remove the burned wicks and trays in which to put the burned wicks. 39 Use 33 kilograms of pure gold to make the lampstand, the tongs, and the trays.

40 Make sure to make these things according to the instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.

26 1 As for the sacred tent, make it using ten long hangings of finely twisted linen. A skilled craftsman must take blue, purple, and red thread, and embroider these hangings with designs that represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. 2 Make each hanging 14. 5 meters long and two meters wide. Make them all the same size. 3 Sew five hangings together as one set, and sew the other five hangings together as another set. 4 For each set, make loops of blue cloth and fasten them along the outer edge of the hanging, at the end of each set. 5 Put 50 loops on the edge of the first set, and 50 loops at the edge of the second set so that the loops are opposite to each other. 6 Make 50 gold fasteners and fasten both of the sets together with them to make the sacred tent one unit.

7 Make a cover for the sacred tent from 11 pieces of cloth made from goats' hair. 8 Each of the 11 pieces of cloth will be the same dimensions: 15 meters long and two meters wide. 9 Sew five of these pieces of cloth together to make one set, and sew the other six pieces of cloth together to make another set. Fold the sixth piece of cloth in half to make it double over the front of the cover. 10 Make 100 loops of blue cloth, and fasten 50 of them to the outer edge of the one set and fasten 50 to the outer edge of the other set. 11 Make 50 bronze hooks and fasten the hooks to the loops to connect them, so the cover will be one unit. 12 Let the extra part of the tent cover, the half piece that extends beyond the linen cloth, hang over the back side of the sacred tent. 13 The extra half-meter of cover on each side, the part that extends beyond the linen cloth, must hang over the two sides of the sacred tent to protect the sides. 14 Make another cover to go over the tent from red rams' skins, and a top cover from fine leather hides.

15 Make a standing framework from acacia wood for the sacred tent. **16** Each frame is to be five meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide. **17** Make two pegs **at the bottom of** each frame to fasten them together. Make each frame for the tabernacle this way. **18** Make 20 frames for the south side of the sacred tent. **19** Make 40 silver bases to go underneath the 20 frames. Put two bases under each frame and fit their two pegs into the bases. **20** For the other side—**that is,** the north side—of the sacred tent **make** 20 frames **21** and 40 silver bases for them. **Put** two bases under each frame. **22** For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, make six frames. **23** Make two frames for the rear corners of the sacred tent. **24** Match them to each other at the bottom and top. Secure the tops together with a ring. Do this for both, making them the corner pieces. **25** Make eight frames and 16 silver bases, two bases under each frame.

26 Make crossbars from acacia wood. Make five crossbars for the frames on the **north** side of the sacred tent, **27** five crossbars for the frames on the **south** side of the sacred tent, and five crossbars for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, the west side. **28** The center crossbar, right in the middle of the frames, will reach all the way from edge to edge. **29** Cover the frames and crossbars with gold. Make the rings for fastening the crossbars to the frames from gold. **30** Build the sacred tent in the way that I have shown you here on this mountain.

31 Make a curtain from fine linen. A skilled craftsman must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn, making designs to represent the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest. **32** Suspend the curtain from gold hooks on four gold-covered posts made from acacia wood. Set each post in a silver base. **33** Suspend the curtain from fasteners **attached to the roof of the sacred tent**. Put the sacred chest behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. **34** Put the lid on top of the sacred chest in the Most Holy Place. **35** Put the table and the lampstand on the other side of the curtain on opposite sides from each other. Put the lampstand on the south side of the sacred tent, and put the table for the sacred bread on the north side. **36** Make a curtain as the tent entrance. A skilled weaver must make it from fine linen with blue, purple, and red yarn. **37** To hold up this curtain, make five posts from acacia wood. Cover them with gold and fasten gold clasps to them. Also make a bronze base for each of these posts.

27 [1] Make an altar from acacia wood. Make it square: two and a half meters long on each side and one and a half meters tall. [2] Make a projection that looks like a horn on each of the top corners. Make them from the same block of wood as the altar. Cover the whole altar with bronze. [3] Make all its implements from bronze. Make pans to collect the ashes from burning the fat, shovels for cleaning out the ashes, basins, forks for turning the meat as it cooks, and buckets for carrying hot coals. [4] Make a bronze lattice grating to hold the wood and burning coals. Fasten a bronze ring to each of the four corners of the grate. [5] Put the grating under the rim that is around the altar. Make it so that it is inside the altar, halfway down. [6] Make poles for carrying the altar from acacia wood and cover them with bronze. [7] Put the poles through the rings on each side of the altar to carry it. [8] Make the altar from boards and make it hollow in the middle. They must make it according to these instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.

[9] Also make a courtyard around the sacred tent with more curtains of fine linen. For the south side, hang 50 meters of curtain [10] from 20 bronze posts. Make 20 bronze bases for the posts and hooks on them and silver connectors. [11] And likewise for the north side of the courtyard: hang 50 meters of curtains from 20 posts, with their 20 bronze bases, hooks, and silver connectors. [12] Make a curtain 25 meters long along the west side of the courtyard. Support them with ten posts, with a base under each post. [13] On the east side the courtyard must also be 25 meters wide. [14] Make a curtain seven and a half meters long for one side of the entrance, with three posts and bases. [15] Make another curtain seven and a half meters long for the other side of the entrance, also with three posts and bases. [16] Make a curtain from finely twined linen ten meters wide for the courtyard entrance. A skilled weaver must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn. Hang it from four posts, each one with a base under it. [17] Put silver bands around all of the posts of the courtyard. Make the clasps from silver, and the bases from bronze. [18] Make the whole courtyard, from the east entrance to the west end, 50 meters long and 25 meters wide, and the curtains that enclose it two and a half meters high. Make all the curtains from fine linen, and all the bases under the posts from bronze. [19] Make all the things that are not made of gold that are for use inside the sacred tent and in the courtyard, and all the tent pegs to support the sacred tent and the curtains that form the courtyard from bronze.

20 Command the Israelites to bring you purified oil squeezed from olives, so that the lamp
is always burning. 21 In the outer part of the sacred tent, outside the curtain where the sacred
chest is, Aaron and his sons must take care to keep the lamps burning every night from evening
to morning for Yahweh. The Israelites must obey this regulation throughout all future
generations.

28 1 Have your older brother Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar,
come close to you and away from the Israelites, so they can be my priests. 2 Make holy
vestments for your brother Aaron, so he reflects my honor and beauty. 3 Talk to all the skilled
artisans, those whom I have made excellent at crafting things. Tell them to make vestments for
Aaron to wear when you dedicate him to become a priest to serve me. 4 They should make
these vestments: a sacred pouch for Aaron to wear over his breast, a sacred apron, a robe, an
embroidered tunic, a turban, and a waistband. They must make these holy vestments so that
your older brother Aaron and his sons can wear them as they serve me by doing the work that
priests do. 5 The skilled workmen should receive fine linen and gold, blue, purple, and red
thread to make the vestments.

6 The skilled workmen must make the sacred apron from finely twisted linen. They must
skillfully embroider it with blue, purple, and red thread, and with fine gold thread. 7 It must
have two shoulder straps attached on both edges to connect it together. 8 Make a carefully
woven belt that matches the sacred apron. Make it from the same piece of cloth as the apron.
(That cloth was finely twisted linen with skillfully embroidered blue, purple, red thread, and fine
gold thread.) Sew it onto the apron.

9 Take two onyx stones and carve Jacob's 12 sons' names on them. 10 Carve the names in
the order in which Jacob's sons were born. Carve six names on one stone and the other six
names on the other stone. 11 A gem cutter should carve these names in the two stones like he
is making a signet ring. Then he should mount the stones in decorative gold settings. 12 Fasten
the memorial stones onto the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. Then Aaron will memorialize
the names of the 12 tribes of Israel by carrying them on his shoulders whenever he serves
Yahweh. 13 Make the decorative settings for the stones from gold. 14 Make two chains of
purified gold by braiding gold like cords and fasten the cord chains to the decorative settings.

15 Make a sacred pouch for decision-making. Make it of the same materials as the sacred apron, and skillfully embroider it in the same way with gold, blue, purple, and red finely twisted linen. **16** Fold the material double so that it is a square 23 centimeters long and 23 centimeters wide. **17** Fasten four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch. In the first row, put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a green emerald. **18** Put a green turquoise, a blue sapphire, and a clear diamond in the second row. **19** Put a red jacinth, a white agate, and a purple amethyst in the third row. **20** Put a yellow beryl, an onyx, and a green jasper in the fourth row. Mount all these stones in decorative gold settings. **21** **A gem cutter should carve** the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob into each of these stones like he is making signet rings. These name-stones will represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

22 Attach two chains that they made from purified gold and braided like cords to the sacred pouch. **23** Make two gold rings for the sacred pouch and attach them to the pouch's **upper** corners. **24** Fasten one end of each gold cord to one of the rings on the top corner of the pouch. **25** Fasten the other end of each cord to the two decorative settings that enclose the stones. Then put those on the front side of the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. **26** Make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch on the inside edges next to the sacred apron. **27** Make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps near where the shoulder straps join the sacred apron just above the sash. **28** Tie the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord so that the sacred pouch is above the sash and does not come loose from the sacred apron.

29 Therefore, whenever he enters the Holy Place where Yahweh is, Aaron will continually memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of Israel by carrying them close to his chest, in the sacred pouch for making decisions. **30** Put the **things called** Urim and Thummim into the sacred pouch that he uses to know how I judged. In that way, they will be close to his chest when Aaron comes to talk to me. Aaron must always wear the items that reveal how I judge the Israelites on his chest when he meets with me.

31 Make the robe **that Aaron will wear underneath his** sacred apron from only blue material. **32** Make an opening in the middle through which the priest can put his head. Weave a

reinforced border around this opening to keep the collar from tearing. 33 All around the lower edge on the robe, fasten decorations that look like pomegranate fruit. Make them from blue, purple, and red yarn. Also hang gold bells in between the pomegranates. 34 So the pattern will be one gold bell and then one pomegranate and then repeat all the way around the bottom of the robe. 35 Whenever Aaron enters or leaves my presence in the Holy Place in the sacred tent for his priestly ministry, he must wear the robe. I will hear the bells, and he will not die.

36 Make a decoration from purified gold and carve into it the words, 'Dedicated to Yahweh,' just like carving a signet ring. 37 Fasten this ornament to the front of the turban by a blue cord. 38 Aaron must always wear the turban on his forehead so that I will accept the things that the Israelites dedicate to me. If there is anything wrong with anything they dedicate to me, Aaron will be guilty instead of the people.

39 Weave the long-sleeved tunic from fine linen. Also make the turban from fine linen. A skilled weaver must make the waistband. 40 Make long-sleeved tunics, waistbands, and caps for Aaron's sons so they reflect my honor and beauty. 41 Put these clothes on your older brother Aaron and on his sons. Then consecrate them and authorize them to be my priests by anointing them with olive oil.

42 Make linen undershorts for them. The undershorts should extend from their waists to their thighs in order that no one can see their genitalia. 43 Aaron and his sons must always wear those undershorts when they enter the sacred tent or when they come near to the altar to offer sacrifices in the Holy Place. In this way, they will not be guilty, and they will not die.

Aaron and all his male descendants must obey this rule forever.

29 1 Do the following things to dedicate Aaron and his sons to serve me by being priests. Select one young bull and two rams that do not have any defects. 2 Also, using finely ground wheat flour, bake these all without yeast: plain bread, soft bread with olive oil in it, and thin wafers with oil on the outside. 3 Put them in a basket. Bring the basket with the bread in it, the young bull, and the two rams to me. 4 Take Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent and wash them with water. 5 Then put the vestments on Aaron—the long-sleeved tunic, the robe under the sacred apron, the sacred apron, and the sacred pouch. Tie the sacred apron

onto him with its sash. 6 Put the turban on his head, and fasten to the turban the sacred ornament that has the words 'Dedicated to Yahweh' engraved on it. 7 Then take the anointing oil and pour some on his head to dedicate him. 8 Then bring his sons and put the long-sleeved tunics on them. 9 Tie the sashes around Aaron and his sons' waists and secure the caps on their heads. This is an eternal law: they are the priests. You will authorize them for this.

10 Then bring the young bull to the front of the sacred tent. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on the head of the young bull, 11 sacrifice the young bull by slitting its throat before Yahweh outside the entrance to the sacred tent and catch the blood in a bowl. 12 Take some of that blood with your finger and smear it on the projections of the altar. Pour the rest of the blood at the bottom of the altar. 13 Take all the fat that covers the inner organs of the young bull, the fatty covering of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them. Burn all these on the altar until they are completely gone. 14 But you must burn the meat of the young bull and its hide and intestines on a fire outside the camp. Sacrificing the bull purifies the altar.

15 Select one of the rams. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on its head, 16 kill the ram by slitting its throat. Catch the blood and sprinkle it all over the altar. 17 Then cut the ram into pieces. Wash its inner organs and its legs, and put those with the head and the rest of the body parts 18 on the altar. Then completely burn it all. That will be a burnt offering to me, Yahweh, and the fire's smell will please me.

19 Take the other ram. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on its head, 20 kill the ram by slitting its throat. Catch the blood. Smear some of the blood on the bottom portion of Aaron's and his sons' right ears, on their right thumbs, and on the big toes on their right feet. Throw the rest of the blood against the four sides of the altar. 21 Wipe up some of the blood that is on the altar, mix it with some of the oil for anointing, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his clothes, and on his sons and their clothes. By doing this, you will dedicate them and their clothes to me.

22 Also, cut off the ram's fat: its fat tail, and the fat that covers the inner organs, the fatty covering of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh. (This ram is for making holy Aaron and his sons, who will be my priests.) 23 Finally, from the basket of bread that they baked without yeast (the one that you brought to me), take a plain round loaf, a piece

of soft bread with oil in it, and a thin wafer with oil on the outside. 24 Put all these things into
the hands of Aaron and his sons. Then tell them to lift them up high to dedicate them to me.
25 Then take them from their hands and completely burn them on the altar, on top of the burnt
offering. That also will be a fire offering to me, and its smell will please me. 26 Then take the
breast of the ram for making Aaron holy and lift it up high to dedicate it to me. But then this
part of the animal will be for you to eat. 27 Set these apart from the ram for making holy
Aaron and his sons as my priests: the breast that you lifted high to dedicate to me and the thigh
that you presented to me. These are for Aaron and his sons. 28 This custom will continue
forever. Whenever the Israelites bring offerings to show they are friends with me, the breast
and the thigh of animals that they present to me will be for Aaron and his male descendants to
eat.

29 After Aaron dies, the sacred vestments that he wore will belong to his male descendants.
They will wear them when a leader anoints them to authorize them to be priests. 30 Aaron's
descendant who becomes high priest after him and enters the sacred tent and performs rituals
in the Holy Place must wear these vestments for seven days.

31 Take the breast and thigh of the ram that they sacrificed to make Aaron and his sons
holy, and boil it in a location set aside for that. 32 After it is cooked, Aaron and his sons must
eat the meat, along with the bread that is left in the basket, at the entrance to the sacred tent.
33 They will eat these things from the offering that made them holy by covering their sins
when they became priests. But no one else can eat these things, because they are reserved for
the priests. 34 If any of the holy meat or bread is left over in the morning, you must completely
burn it. Do not eat any of it, because it is sacred.

35 Do all this to Aaron and his sons just as I have told you. You will prepare them for
seven days. 36 Sacrifice a young bull to purify the altar each of those days. That will
ceremonially cleanse the altar by covering the altar's imperfections. You must also pour olive
oil over the altar to dedicate it to Yahweh. 37 After you cover the altar for seven days you will
have made it holy. It will be so very holy that it will make anything that touches it holy too.

38 You must also perpetually sacrifice two one-year-old lambs per day on the altar. 39 You
must sacrifice one lamb in the morning and the other around twilight. 40 With the first lamb,

also offer two liters of finely ground wheat flour mixed with a liter of the best kind of olive oil, and one liter of wine as a drink-offering. 41 In the evening, when you sacrifice the other lamb, offer the same amounts of flour, olive oil, and wine as you did in the morning. This will be an offering to me, Yahweh, that they will burn, and its smell will please me.

42 You and your descendants must continue making these offerings to me, Yahweh, throughout all future generations. You must offer them at the entrance to the sacred tent. That is where I will meet with you and speak to you. 43 That is where I will meet with the Israelites, and the brilliant light of my presence will cause that place to be holy. 44 I will dedicate the sacred tent and the altar. I will also dedicate Aaron and his sons to be my priests. 45 I will live with the Israelites, and I will be their God. 46 They will know that I, Yahweh their God, am the one who brought them out of Egypt in order that I might live among them. I am Yahweh, the God whom they worship.

30 1 Make an altar from acacia wood for burning incense. 2 It is to be square, one-half meter on each side. It is to be one meter high. Make projections that look like horns on the same block of wood as the altar. 3 Cover the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. Put a gold molding all around it. 4 Make two gold rings and attach them to the altar below the molding, one on each side of the altar. These rings are to hold the poles for carrying the altar. 5 Make these two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. 6 Put this incense altar outside the curtain that hangs in front of the sacred chest. (The chest that has a lid covering the stone slabs, where I will talk with you.)

7 Aaron must burn sweet-smelling incense on this altar. He must burn some every morning when he takes care of the lamps, 8 and he must burn some in the evening when he lights the lamps. Always keep incense burning for me throughout all future generations. 9 Do not burn on the altar any incense that I have not told you to burn, or burn any animal on it, or any flour offering for me, nor pour any wine on it as an offering. 10 Once a year, Aaron must take the purifying blood from the annual sacrifice that covers up the bad things people do and put it on the projections on the altar to cover the altar's flaws. Each high priest will cover the altar's flawsthis way throughout all future generations. The altar will be very holy, dedicated to me, Yahweh."

11 Yahweh said to Moses, **12** "Whenever your leaders count to find out how many Israelites there are, each man who they count must pay a price to me to save his life. This is so I do not cause the people to become sick and die when the leaders count them. **13** When a man walks by a leader so he can count him he must pay silver that weighs half of a standard weight. (Use the official tabernacle weight standard, which is about 11 grams.) This half-weight of silver is an offering to me, Yahweh. **14** Every man who is at least 20 years old must pay this amount to me, Yahweh, when he walks by a leader so the leader can count him. **15** Rich men must not pay more than this amount, and poor men must not pay less than this amount when they pay this money to me, Yahweh, to save their lives. **16** Take the life-saving money from the Israelites and use it for work on the sacred tent. It will remind me, Yahweh, that the Israelites have paid money to save their lives."

17 Yahweh said to Moses, **18** "Make a bronze washbasin and a bronze base for it. Put it between the sacred tent and the altar and fill it with water. **19** Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and their feet in the basin. **20** They must wash with water before they enter the sacred tent so they will not die. Before they come to the altar to burn offerings as sacrifices to me, Yahweh, **21** they must wash their hands and their feet so that they will not die. This will be a ritual for them and every generation of men descended from Aaron for all time."

22 Yahweh said to Moses, **23** "Collect to yourself some of the finest spices—six kilograms of liquid myrrh, and then half that much: three kilograms of sweet-smelling cinnamon, three kilograms of a sweet-smelling cane, **24** and six kilograms of cassia. Weigh everything according to the tabernacle standard. Also, collect four liters of olive oil. **25** Make a sacred oil for anointing with these ingredients. A perfume mixer must mix this mixed perfume. It will be a sacred oil for anointing. **26** Use this oil to anoint the sacred tent, the sacred chest, **27** the table and all the things that the priests use with it, the lampstand and all the things that the priests use to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, **28** and the altar for burning sacrifices, and all the things that the priests use with it, and the washbasin and its base. **29** In that way, you will dedicate those items to me. They will be so very holy that they will make anything that touches them holy too.

30 Dedicate Aaron and his sons to be my priests by anointing them. **31** Tell the Israelites, 'This oil will be my sacred oil for anointing throughout all future generations. **32** You must not

pour it on the bodies of people who are not priests, and you must not make other oil to be like it by mixing those same things. This oil is reserved for me, and you must consider it sacred.
33 You must drive out from Israel anyone who makes a perfume like this or who puts it on anyone who is not a priest.'"

34 Yahweh also said to Moses, "Collect equal parts of several sweet spices: stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense. 35 A perfume mixer must mix these, along with salt, into a perfumed incense. It will be clean and sacred. 36 Beat some of it into a fine powder. Then take some of it into the sacred tent and set it in front of the sacred chest where I meet you. You all must consider this incense to be very sacred. 37 The people must not mix the same spices to make this incense for themselves. They must consider this incense sacred, only for me, Yahweh. 38 You must drive out from Israel anyone who makes a perfume like this."

31 1 Yahweh said to Moses, 2 "Pay attention. I have chosen a man named Bezalel, son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe descended from Judah. 3 I will cause my spirit to teach him to know how to make all kinds of fine goods wisely and intelligently. 4 He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. 5 He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold settings. He can carve things from wood and do other skilled work. 6 Pay attention! I have also appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, from the tribe of Dan, to work with him. I have also given special ability to other skilled men in order that they can make all the things that I have commanded you to make. 7 Those things include: The sacred tent; the sacred chest with its lid on top of it; all the other things that will be inside the sacred tent, 8 the table and all the things that the priests use with it, the pure gold lampstand and all the things that the priests use to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, 9 the altar for burning sacrifices and all the things the priests use with it, and the washbasin with its base; 10 the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests; 11 the oil for anointing, and the sweet-smelling incense for the Holy Place. The craftsmen must make all these things exactly as I have told you that they should do."

12 Yahweh said to Moses, 13 "Tell the Israelites, 'Constantly obey my instructions regarding the Sabbath days for rest. Those days will remind me and you and your descendants, throughout all future generations, that I, Yahweh, have dedicated you to be my people. 14 You

must obey my rules about the Sabbath days for rest, because you must regard them as dedicated to me. You must kill people who disrespect these days by working on them. You must remove them from Israel. **15** You may work for six days each week, but the seventh day of each week is a solemn Sabbath-rest day, dedicated to me, Yahweh. You must execute anyone who does any work on a Sabbath day of rest. **16** The Israelites must respect the Sabbath days of rest, and rest on them throughout all future generations. This agreement never ends **17** between me and the Israelites. It will remind you forever that I, Yahweh, created the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day I stopped doing that work and recuperated.'"

18 When Yahweh finished talking with Moses on the top of Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone slabs on which he had engraved his commandments with his own fingers.

32 **1** Moses stayed on top of the mountain for a long time. When the people saw that he was not returning, they went to Aaron and said to him, "Get up and make us gods who will lead us on our journey. We do not know what happened to that man Moses, who brought us here out of Egypt."

2 Aaron replied, "Take your wives' and your children's gold earrings from them, and bring them to me." **3** So the people took off all their own gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. **4** After he received the gold, he melted it in a fire. He molded the softened gold and made a statue that looked like a young bull. The people saw it and said, "This is the Israelite god who rescued us from Egypt!"

5 When Aaron saw how the people reacted, he built an altar in front of the bull. Then he announced, "Tomorrow we will have a celebration to honor Yahweh!" **6** So early the next morning the people killed animals and burnt them as sacrifices on the altar. They also brought sacrifices to restore fellowship with others. Then they sat down to eat and to drink wine. Then they got up and partied.

7 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down from the mountain, because your people, the ones that you brought up here from Egypt, are acting perversely! **8** They have already stopped obeying my commands about how to live. From melted gold, they have made a statue that looks like a young bull. They have worshiped it and offered sacrifices to it. They are saying,

‘This is the Israelite god who rescued us from Egypt!’” **9** Then Yahweh said to Moses, “I have been observing these people. Look at how obstinate they are. **10** Because of this, I am very angry with them, so I am going to destroy them. Do not try to stop me! Then I will cause you **and your descendants** to become a great nation.”

11 But Moses pleaded with his God, Yahweh, and said, “Yahweh, please do not be angry with your people. These are the people whom you saved from Egypt with great power and mighty works! **12** **If you destroy them** the Egyptians will say that you had a wicked plan. **They will say** you led the Israelites out to the mountains to kill them and to remove them entirely from the earth. Stop being angry and relent from punishing your people. **13** Recall your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You solemnly promised them, ‘I will enable you to have as many descendants as the stars that are in the sky. I will give those descendants all this land that I am talking about. It will be their land forever.’” **14** So Yahweh relented. He did not punish his people as he had said he would do.

15 Then Moses turned around and went down the mountain. He was carrying in his hands the two stone slabs on which Yahweh had inscribed his commandments. He had inscribed on both sides of the slabs, both front and back. **16** As for the slabs, God had made them. As for the inscription, God had inscribed it. He had engraved on the slabs.

17 Joshua heard the sound of the people shouting. So he said to Moses, “There is a noise in the camp that sounds like the noise of a battle!”

18 But Moses said,

> “That is not a victory shout;
> or a defeated cry.
> I hear singing!”

19 As soon as Moses came close to the camp and saw the statue of the bull and the people dancing, he became very angry. He flung the stone slabs down **onto the ground** at the base of the mountain, and they broke completely. **20** Then he took the statue of the bull that they had made and melted it in the fire. **When it cooled,** he ground it into fine powder. Then he threw the powder on top of the water and forced the Israelites to drink it.

21 Then Moses said to Aaron, “What did these people do to you that you caused them to sin so much?”

22 Aaron replied, “Please do not be angry with me, my lord. You know how likely these people are to do wicked things. **23** They said to me, ‘Make us a god to lead us because we do not know what has happened to that Moses guy who brought us out of Egypt!’ **24** So I said to them, ‘Everyone who is wearing **pieces of** gold **jewelry** should take them off.’ So they **took them off and** gave them to me. I threw them into the fire, and out came this statue of a young bull!”

25 Moses saw that Aaron had allowed the people to act wildly, so that their enemies would laugh at them. **26** So he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, “Everyone who is loyal to Yahweh, come close to me!” All the men in the tribe of Levi gathered around him. **27** Then he said to them, “Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, commands that every one of you should fasten your sword to your side, and then go through the camp from this entrance to the other one and back again. Each one of you must kill the **unfaithful** men, **even if** they are your brother, your friend, or your neighbor.” **28** The men in the tribe of Levi did what Moses told them to do. They killed 3,000 Israelite men that day. **29** Moses said **to the men in the tribe of Levi**, “Because each of you **killed** even your own son and brother, Yahweh has consecrated and blessed you today.”

30 The next day, Moses said to the people, “You have sinned very greatly. But I will now climb up the mountain **again** to **talk with** Yahweh. Perhaps I can **persuade him to** forgive you for sinning **like this**.” **31** So Moses went back up **the mountain** and said to Yahweh, “These people sinned very greatly when they made for themselves a gold idol **and worshiped it**! Please, **32** if you would, forgive them for their sin now. But if you will not forgive them, please erase my name from the book in which you have written **your people’s names**.”

33 But Yahweh said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me, I will erase their names from that book. **34** Now, go lead the Israelites to the place I told you about! Watch for my angel going in front of you. However, sometime I will come and I will punish them for how they sinned.”

35 Later Yahweh caused the people to become sick because they had made Aaron make the bull idol.

33 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Get up and go from here with the people whom you
led out of Egypt. Go to the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give to
their descendants. **2** I will send my angel ahead of you, and I will remove the people
descended from Canaan, Amor, Heth, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus from that land. **3** You will go to a
land that will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops. But I will not go with you
myself, because if I did that, I might annihilate you while you are traveling, because you are
very obstinate people.”

4-5 Yahweh told Moses to tell the Israelites, “You are very stubborn. If I were to go with
you for even a moment, I would kill you. Now take off your fine things **to show that you are
sorry for sinning**. Then I will decide if I will punish you.” When the people heard that Yahweh
spoke harshly, they were sorry, and no one wore fancy things. **6** From Mount Sinai on, the
Israelites took off and left off all their fine things.

7 **Until they built the sacred tent,** Moses set up a tent outside the camp, far away. He called
it “the tent of meeting.” Everyone who wanted Yahweh to decide something for them would go
out of the camp to the tent of meeting. **8** Whenever Moses went out to the tent of meeting, all
the people would stand at their own tent entrances and watch him until he had walked into the
tent of meeting. **9** Whenever Moses went into the tent of meeting, the tall cloud would come
down and stay at the tent entrance, and then **Yahweh** would talk with Moses. **10** When the
people saw the tall cloud standing at the entrance to the tent of meeting, they would all bow to
worship Yahweh at their own tent entrances. **11** Yahweh would speak directly to Moses like
someone speaks to his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp. But his young helper,
Joshua son of Nun, would stay in the tent of meeting.

12 Moses said to Yahweh, “Please pay attention. You told me to lead the Israelites **to the
land that you will show me**. But you have not told me whom you will send **to help** me! You also
said that you know me well and that you are pleased with me. **13** So now, if you are truly
pleased with me, I ask you, please tell me the things that you are going to do in order that I
may know you better and continue to please you. Please remember that the Israelites are the
people whom you chose to belong to you.”

14 Yahweh replied, “I will go with you and relieve you.”

15 Moses replied to Yahweh, “If you do not go with me, do not make us leave this place.
16 The only way that others will know that you are pleased with me and with your people is if
you go with us! If you go with us, it will show that we are different from all the other nations
on the earth.”

17 Yahweh replied to Moses, “I will do what you have asked, because I know you well and
I am pleased with you.”

18 Then Moses said, “Please let me see how glorious you are.”

19 Yahweh replied, “I will display to you how good I am and tell you what my name
Yahweh means. I will act kindly to anyone I choose, and I will act mercifully to anyone I
choose. 20 But you cannot see my face, because anyone who sees my face will die. 21 But
look! Here is a place close to me where you can stand on a large rock. 22 When my glorious
light goes by you, I will put you in a large hole in the rock and cover you with my hand until I
have gone by you. 23 Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back, but you will
not see my face.”

34 1 Yahweh kept talking to Moses, “Cut two slabs of stone like the first slabs, the ones
that you smashed. Then I will write the same thing on them as was on the first slabs. 2 Get
ready tomorrow morning, and come up and stand before me at the top of Mount Sinai. 3 Do
not allow anyone to come up with you. I do not want anyone else to be anywhere on the
mountain. Do not even allow any sheep or cattle to eat grass near the mountain.” 4 So Moses
cut two slabs of stone like the first ones. He rose early the next morning, picked up the slabs,
and carried them in his hands up to the top of Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had told him.

5 Then Yahweh came down in the tall cloud and stood there with Moses. Then Yahweh
called out his name, “Yahweh.” 6 Yahweh passed in front of him and called out, “I am Yahweh
God. I always act mercifully and kindly toward people, and I do not get angry quickly. I
abundantly love and faithfully do what I promise for my people. 7 I abundantly love people for
thousands of generations. I forgive people for doing wrong, transgressing, and sinning. But I
will certainly punish the guilty. If people do wrong, I cause that to affect their descendants,
down to the third and fourth generation.”

8 Quickly Moses bowed low down on the ground and worshiped Yahweh. **9** He said, “My Lord, if you are now pleased with me, I ask that you go with us. These people are very stubborn, but forgive us for all our sins, and accept us as the people who belong to you forever.”

10 Yahweh replied, “Pay attention! I am going to remind you of what I agreed with the Israelites. **As for me,** I will perform great miracles. These will be miracles that no one has ever done on the earth in any people group. Every nation around them will see the great things that I, Yahweh, will do. I will do things for you all that will make everyone revere me. **11** Obey what I am about to command you today. I will surely force the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites to leave the land for you.

12 Be careful that you do not agree to live peacefully with any of the people who live in the land into which you are going. If you do that, **you will begin to do the evil things that they do.** It will be like falling into a trap. **13** Rather, you must tear down their altars, destroy their idols, and cut down the poles that they use to worship Asherah. **14** **Do that** because you must not worship any other god, because I, Yahweh, am passionate for people to recognize that I am the only true God, like a husband is passionate for his wife to love only him. **15** **Again,** do not agree to live peacefully with any of the people who live in the land, because when they worship their gods and offer sacrifices to them, they will invite you to join them. Then you will **be unfaithful to me and sin by** eating the food that they sacrifice to their gods. **16** Then you will **sin by** having some of their women to be wives for your sons. These women will worship their own gods. They will also make your sons be unfaithful to me by worshiping those gods.

17 Do not make your own gods by pouring melted metal into statue molds.

18 Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread the way that I commanded you: eat unleavened bread for seven days in the month called Aviv. I set this time because Aviv is the month when you left Egypt.

19 All your firstborn sons belong to me. All the firstborn males of your domesticated animals, cows, sheep, and goats, belong to me. **20** In the case of a firstborn donkey, you must buy it back by killing a lamb instead of it. If you do not buy it back, you must kill the donkey

by breaking its neck. You must buy back every one of your firstborn sons. Do not come to worship me without bringing an offering.

21 Work six days **each week**, but on the seventh day you must rest. Even during the times when you are plowing the ground or harvesting your crops, you must rest on the seventh day.

22 **In the spring,** when you begin to harvest the first wheat crop, have the Celebration of Weeks, and at the end of the year have the Finished Harvest Celebration. **23** Three times every year, all the men must gather together to worship me, the Lord Yahweh, the Israelite's God. **24** Surely, I will force the people groups to leave the land you are going to, and I will make your territory larger. No one will want **to try to conquer** your country while the men come to worship Yahweh your God for these three festivals each year.

25 Do not sacrifice bread you made with yeast along with blood from an animal sacrifice. Do not keep until the next morning any part of the animals you sacrificed at the Passover celebration.

26 **Each year, when you harvest your crops,** take the best of what you harvest first, go to the place where you worship me, and give it to me, Yahweh your God.

When you kill a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk."

27 Yahweh said to Moses, "Write down the words that I have told you. By giving you these commands, I have made an agreement with you and with the Israelites." **28** Moses was there **on the top of the mountain** with Yahweh for 40 days and nights. During that time he did not eat or drink anything. He engraved on the stone slabs the words of the Ten Commandments which were part of Yahweh's solemn agreement.

29 When Moses came back down from Mount Sinai he was carrying the two stone slabs on which he had written the Ten Commandments. His face was very bright from talking to Yahweh, but he did not know it. **30** When Aaron and the Israelites saw Moses, they were amazed that his face was bright, and were afraid to approach him. **31** But Moses summoned them, and Aaron and the other Israelite leaders came back to him, and he talked with them. **32** Afterwards, all the Israelites came near, and Moses told them all that Yahweh had

commanded him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses finished talking to the people, he covered his face with a thin cloth.

34 Whenever Moses entered the tent of meeting to talk with Yahweh, he would remove the cloth. When he came back out, he would always tell the Israelite people everything that Yahweh had commanded him to tell them. 35 The Israelites would see that Moses' face was still bright. Then he would put the cloth on his face again until the next time that he went to talk with Yahweh.

35 1 Moses gathered all the Israelites together and said to them, "This is what Yahweh has commanded you to do. 2 Each week you may work for six days, but on the seventh day, you must rest. It is a sacred day for you, dedicated to Yahweh. You must execute anyone who does any work on the seventh day. 3 Do not light a fire in your homes on the rest days."

4 Moses also said to all the gathered Israelites, "This is what Yahweh has commanded: 5 'Everyone who wants to should bring Yahweh a gift. They should bring these sorts of gifts to Yahweh: gold, silver, or bronze, 6 cloth dyed blue, cloth dyed purple, cloth dyed bright red, fine linen, cloth made from goats' hair, 7 red ram skins, fine leather hides, hard wood from acacia trees, 8 olive oil to burn in the lamps, spices to put in the olive oil for anointing the priests, and spices to put in the sweet-smelling incense, 9 onyx stones and other expensive stones to fasten to the priest's sacred apron and to put on the chest pouch that is on the apron.

10 All the skilled workmen among you should come and make all the things that Yahweh has commanded you to make: 11 the sacred tent with the inner tent; its covering, fasteners, frames, crossbars, posts, and bases; 12 the sacred chest with its poles and its lid, the curtain that will separate the Holy Place from the Very Holy Place, 13 the table with the poles for carrying it and all its utensils, the sacred bread to present before God, 14 the lampstand for making light with its implements and lamps, the oil to burn for light, 15 the altar for burning incense and the poles for carrying the altar, the oil for anointing and the sweet-smelling incense, the curtain for the entrance of the sacred tent, 16 the altar for burning sacrifices and its bronze grating, the poles for carrying the altar, and all its implements, the washbasin and its base, 17 the curtains to surround the courtyard and the posts and bases for the posts to support

the curtains; the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; 18 the pegs and ropes for the sacred tent and its courtyard, 19 the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests in the Holy Place.'"

20 Then all the Israelites left from where they had gathered to listen to Moses. 21 Everyone who wished to bring a gift to Yahweh did so. They brought things to make the sacred tent, all the other items for rituals, and the sacred vestments for the priests. 22 All the men and women who wished to brought necklaces, earrings, rings, gold ornaments—all sorts of things made from gold. Then they lifted them up high to dedicate them to Yahweh. 23 Many people who had blue, purple, or bright red cloth, or fine linen, or cloth made from goats' hair, or red rams' skins, or fine leather hides brought some of these things. 24 Everyone who desired to offer silver or bronze gifts brought them to Yahweh. Anyone owning wood from acacia trees brought it for any part of the building work. 25 All the women who were skilled at making cloth brought blue, purple, or red woolen yarn and fine linen thread that they had made by hand-spinning. 26 All the skilled women who wanted to made thread from goats' hair by spinning. 27 The leaders brought onyx stones and other fine stones for fastening to Aaron's sacred apron and sacred pouch, 28 and spices and oil to use for the lamps, anointing oil, and sweet-smelling incense. 29 All the Israelite men and women who wanted to bring these things freely offered them to Yahweh for doing the work that he had commanded Moses tell them to do.

30 Moses said to the Israelites, "Listen carefully. Yahweh has chosen a man named Bezalel, son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe descended from Judah. 31 Yahweh has caused his Spirit to teach him to know how to make all kinds of fine goods wisely and intelligently. 32 He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. 33 He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold settings. He can carve things from wood and do other inventive, skilled work. 34 Yahweh has also made Bezalel and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan, able to teach others what they do. 35 He has enabled them to skillfully do all kinds of crafts-work—those who create artistic things, those who embroider designs using blue, purple, or red woolen yarn with linen cloth, and those who make the cloth. They are able to plan and do many kinds of artistic work.

36 **1** Bezalel and Oholiab will do this work along with all the other skillful people.
Yahweh has made them skillful and able to know how to follow his instructions to build the
sacred place."

2 So Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and all the other people that Yahweh had
made skillful who wished to come do some of the work. **3** They took all the gifts for building
the sacred tent from Moses that the Israelites had brought to him. But the Israelites continued
gladly bringing more gifts every morning. **4** As a result, each and every skillful craftsman who
was working to make the sacred tent left their work and came to Moses. **5** The craftsmen told
him, "The Israelites are bringing many times more than we need to build as Yahweh has
commanded us!" **6** So Moses told them to proclaim a message throughout the camp,
"Everyone should stop making and bringing material gifts for the sacred tent!" So the people
stopped bringing gifts. **7** They had more than enough materials for all the work.

8 All the most skilled men among the workmen made the sacred tent, using ten long strips
of finely twisted linen. A skilled craftsman took blue, purple, and red thread, and embroidered
these strips with designs that represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. **9** Each
strip was 14. 5 meters long and two meters wide. They were all the same size. **10** He sewed
five strips together **as one set**, and sewed the other five strips together **as another set**. **11** For
each set, he made loops of blue cloth and fastened them along the outer edge of the strip, at the
end of each set. **12** He put 50 loops on the edge of the first set, and 50 loops at the edge of the
second set so that the loops were opposite each other. **13** He made 50 gold fasteners and
fastened both of the sets together with them to make the sacred tent one unit.

14 He made a cover for the sacred tent from 11 pieces of cloth made from goats' hair.
15 Each of the 11 pieces of cloth was the same dimensions: 15 meters long and two meters
wide. **16** He sewed five of these pieces of cloth together **to make one set**, and he sewed the
other six pieces of cloth together **to make another set**. **17** He made **100 loops of blue cloth,** and
fastened 50 of them to the outer edge of a set and fastened 50 to the outer edge of the other set.
18 He made 50 bronze clasps for connecting the tent into one big piece. **19** He made another
cover from red rams' skins to go over the tent, and a top cover from fine leather hides.

20 He made a standing framework from acacia wood for the sacred tent. **21** Each frame was five meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide. **22** He made two pegs **at the bottom of** each frame to fasten them together. He made each frame for the tabernacle this way. **23** He made 20 frames for the south side of the sacred tent. **24** He made 40 silver bases to go underneath the 20 frames. He put two bases under each frame and fit their two pegs into the bases. **25** For the other side—**that is,** the north side—of the sacred tent he made 20 frames **26** and 40 silver bases for them. **They put** two bases under each frame. **27** For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, he made six frames. **28** They made two frames for the rear corners of the sacred tent. **29** He matched them to each other at the bottom and top. He secured the tops together with a ring. He did this for both, making them the corner pieces. **30** He made eight frames and 16 silver bases, two bases under each frame.

31 He made crossbars from acacia wood. He made five crossbars for the frames on the **north** side of the sacred tent, **32** five crossbars for the frames on the **south** side of the sacred tent, and five crossbars for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, on the west. **33** He made the center crossbar, right in the middle of the frames, reach all the way from edge to edge. **34** He covered the frames and crossbars with gold. He made the rings for fastening the crossbars to the frames from gold.

35 He made a curtain from fine linen. A skilled craftsman embroidered it with blue, purple, and red yarn, making designs to represent the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest. **36** He made four posts from acacia wood for the curtain. He covered them and their hooks with gold. He formed four silver bases for the posts. **37** He made a curtain as the tent entrance. A skilled weaver made it from fine linen with blue, purple, and red yarn. **38** **He also made** five posts with hooks on them. He covered the tops of the posts and their connectors with gold and **made** a bronze base for each of those posts.

37

1 Then Bezalel made the sacred chest from acacia wood. He made it 125 centimeters long, 75 centimeters wide, and 75 centimeters high. **2** He covered the chest with pure gold inside and outside and made a gold molding for all around it. **3** He made four rings from gold and fastened them to the four legs of the chest. He put two of the rings on each side of the

chest. [4] He made two poles from acacia wood, and covered them with gold. [5] He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest so that the Levites could carry it. [6] He made a lid for the chest from pure gold. It was 125 centimeters long and 75 centimeters wide. [7] He hammered a large lump of gold into the form of two creatures that have wings for the two ends of the lid. [8] He made the winged creatures from the gold from each end of the sacred chest's lid, one at one end and the other at the other end. [9] The creature's wings spread out and reached up to cover the lid. They faced each other, facing the chest's lid that was between them.

[10] He made a table from acacia wood. It was one meter long, one-half of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high. [11] He covered the table with pure gold and put a gold molding all around it. [12] He made a rim all around it, eight centimeters wide, and made a gold molding around the rim. [13] He molded four rings from gold. He fastened them to the four corners of the table. Each ring was close to each table leg [14] near the rim. They held poles for carrying the table. [15] He made two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. They were for carrying the table. [16] He made all the utensils for the table from pure gold—dishes, cups, bowls, and jars for the priests to use to pour out wine to offer to Yahweh. [17] He made the lampstand from pure gold. He hammered one large lump of gold to make its base and its shaft. He made the cups, with the flower buds and petals that decorate them, from that same lump. [18] There were six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. [19] Each branch had three gold cups that looked like almond flowers on it. The flowers had buds and petals. It was the same for all six branches of the lampstand. [20] On the shaft of the lampstand there were four cups that also looked like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and petals. [21] He made one flower bud beneath every two branches. He attached it to each pair of branches as if they were growing from it. He made all six lampstand branches like this. [22] He hammered all these buds and branches, along with the shaft, from one large lump of pure gold. [23] He made from pure gold: seven lamps, tongs to remove the burned wicks, and trays in which to put the burned wicks. [24] He used 33 kilograms of pure gold to make the lampstand, the tongs, and the trays.

[25] He made the altar for burning incense from acacia wood. It was square, one-half meter on each side and one meter high. There were projections that looked like horns on the same

block of wood as the altar. **26** He covered the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. He put a gold molding all around it. **27** He made two gold rings and attached them to the altar below the molding, one on each side of the altar. These rings were to hold the poles for carrying the altar. **28** He made those two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. **29** He made the sacred oil for anointing and the pure sweet-smelling incense. A perfumer mixed the incense together.

38 **1** Bezalel made the altar for burning sacrifices from acacia wood. It was square, two and a half meters long on each side, and one and a half meters tall. **2** He made a projection that looks like a horn on each of the top corners from the same block of wood as the altar. He covered the whole altar with bronze. **3** He made all the implements for the altar: the pans, shovels, basins, forks for working with cooking meat, and buckets for carrying hot coals. He made all of these implements from bronze. **4** He made a bronze lattice grating to hold the wood and burning coals. He put the grating under the rim that was around the altar. He made it so that it was inside the altar, halfway down. **5** He molded four bronze rings in which to put the poles for the lattice and fastened them to its four corners. **6** He made the poles from acacia wood and covered them with bronze. **7** He put the poles for carrying the altar through the rings on each side of the altar. He made the altar from boards; it was hollow in the middle.

8 He made the bronze washbasin and the bronze base for it. The bronze was from the mirrors that belonged to the women who worked at the entrance of the sacred tent.

9 He made a courtyard around the sacred tent. On the south side, he hung a fine linen curtain 50 meters long **10** from 20 bronze posts that had 20 bronze bases for the posts and hooks on them and silver connectors. **11** For the north side of the courtyard, he hung 50 meters of curtains from 20 posts, each with their bronze bases, hooks, and silver connectors. **12** For the west side of the courtyard, he hung 25 meters of curtains from ten posts, each with their bases, hooks, and silver connectors. **13** The east side also was 25 meters wide. **14** He made a curtain seven and a half meters long for one side of the entrance, with three posts and bases. **15** On the other side, opposite from the entrance to the courtyard, he made a curtain seven and a half meters long, also with three posts and bases. **16** There were fine linen curtains all around

the courtyard. 17 All the posts' bases were bronze. They covered the tops with silver. The pillars' hooks and loops were silver. The ends of the courtyard's pillars had a rounded silver finish. 18 For the entrance of the courtyard, they made a curtain from finely twined linen, and a skilled weaver embroidered it with blue, purple, and red yarn. The curtain was ten meters long and two and a half meters high, just like the other curtains around the courtyard. 19 It had four posts, each with a bronze base. They covered the tops of the posts and their hooks with silver. The loops were silver. 20 They made all the tent pegs to hold the sacred tent and the curtains around the courtyard of bronze.

21 This is a list of all the materials that the craftsmen used to make the sacred tent where the Ten Commandments were. Moses instructed some men from the tribe of Levi to write the list. Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest, supervised the men who wrote it. 22 Bezalel of the tribe of Judah, son of Uri and grandson of Hur made all the things that Yahweh had commanded Moses to make. 23 Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan worked with Bezealel. Oholiab was a skilled engraver who made artistic things. He embroidered designs using blue, purple, and red woolen yarn, and linen.

24 All the gold that they used to make the sacred tent weighed 965 kilograms. They used the official standard when they weighed the gold that the people dedicated to Yahweh. 25 All the silver that the people contributed when the leaders took the census weighed 3,420 kilograms. They also used the official standard when they weighed the silver. 26 They had counted all the men who were at least twenty years old, and each man had paid a silver coin that weighed about five grams, according to the official standard. That was a total of 603,550 men. 27 It took 3,400 kilograms of silver to make the bases under the posts that supported the sacred tent's curtains. They used 34 kilograms for each of the 100 bases. 28 With the remaining the 20 kilograms of silver, they made the hooks for the posts, covered the tops of the posts, and made rounded corners. 29 The people had contributed about 2,400 kilograms of bronze. 30 With the bronze he made the bases to support the posts at the entrance of the sacred tent, the altar for burning sacrifices with its grate and its tools, 31 the bases for the posts that supported the curtains that surrounded the courtyard, the bases for the entrance to the courtyard, and the pegs for the sacred tent and for the curtains around the courtyard.

39 1 Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other skilled workmen made the beautiful holy vestments
for Aaron to wear while he served Yahweh as a priest in the Holy Place. They made them from
blue, purple, and red woolen cloth, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

2 He made the sacred apron from finely twisted linen, blue, purple, and red thread, and
with fine gold wire. 3 They hammered some thin sheets of gold and cut them into thin strips
that they embroidered into the fine linen and into the blue, purple, and red cloth. 4 They made
shoulder straps to attach the two sides of the ephod together. 5 They made a carefully woven
belt that matched the sacred apron. They made it from the same piece of cloth as the apron.
(That cloth was finely twisted linen with skillfully embroidered blue, purple, red thread, and fine
gold thread.) They sewed it onto the apron, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. 6 They
cut two onyx stones and mounted them in decorative gold settings. They engraved the names
of the 12 sons of Jacob on the stones like someone engraves a signet ring. 7 They fastened the
stones onto the shoulder straps of the sacred apron to memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of
Israel, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

8 He made the sacred pouch of the same materials as the sacred apron and skillfully
embroidered it in the same way with gold, blue, purple, and red finely twisted linen. 9 They
folded the material double so that they made the pouch a double-folded square 23 centimeters
long and 23 centimeters wide. 10 They fastened four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch.
In the first row, they put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a red garnet. 11 They put a green
emerald, a blue sapphire, and a white diamond in the second row. 12 They put a red jacinth, a
white agate, and a purple amethyst in the third row. 13 They put a yellow beryl, an onyx, and a
green jasper in the fourth row. They put tiny gold frames around each of the stones. 14 They
carved the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob into each of these stones like they were making
signet rings. These name-stones represented the 12 tribes of Israel.

15 They attached two chains that they made from purified gold and braided like cords to
the sacred pouch. 16 They made two decorative gold settings and two gold rings and attached
them to the upper corners of the sacred pouch. 17 They fastened one end of each gold cord to
one of the rings on the top corner of the pouch. 18 They fastened the other end of each cord to
the two decorative settings that enclose the stones. Then they put those on the front side of the

shoulder straps of the sacred apron. 19 Then they made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch on the inside edges next to the sacred apron. 20 They made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps near where the shoulder straps join with the sacred apron just above the sash. 21 They tied the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord, so that the sacred pouch was above the sash and would not come loose from the sacred apron. They did these things exactly as Yahweh had instructed Moses to do.

22 Bezalel had a weaver make the robe that Aaron would wear underneath his sacred apron from only blue material. 23 It had an opening in the middle like other clothing. They made a border around this opening to prevent the material from tearing. 24 At the lower edge of the robe they fastened decorations that resembled pomegranate fruit. They wove the decorations from blue, purple, and red woolen yarn. 25 They made bells from purified gold and fastened them between each of the decorative pomegranates all around the bottom of the robe. 26 So the pattern was bell, pomegranate, bell, pomegranate, and so on all around the bottom of the robe. The robe was for Aaron to wear while he worked as a priest, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

27 For Aaron and his sons, a skilled weaver made long-sleeved tunics from fine linen, 28 the turban and the caps from fine linen, the undershorts from very finely twined linen, 29 and the sash from fine linen with blue, purple, and red woolen embroidery, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

30 They made a sacred ornamental decoration from purified gold and etched into it the words, “Dedicated to Yahweh,” just like carving a signet ring. 31 They attached a blue cord to this for fastening it to the top of the turban, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

32 After this, they had finished all the work on the sacred tent where they would meet with Yahweh. The Israelites had done everything in exactly the way that Yahweh had commanded Moses to have it done. 33 The craftsmen brought Moses the whole sacred tent structure: the tent and all its equipment, the fasteners, frames, crossbars, posts, bases, 34 the red rams’ skin and fine leather hide coverings for the sacred tent, the curtain for hiding the holiest place, 35 the sacred chest, the poles, the chests’ lid, 36 the table and all its utensils, the sacred bread to

present before God, 37 the pure gold lampstand with all its lamps in a line, and its utensils, and
the oil to burn for light, 38 the golden altar for burning incense, the oil for anointing, the sweet-
smelling incense, the curtain for the entrance to the sacred tent, 39 the bronze altar and its
bronze grating, the poles, and all its implements, the washbasin and its base, 40 the curtains to
surround the courtyard and the posts and bases, the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard,
the ropes and pegs and all the things for serving in the sacred tent where they would meet
Yahweh, 41 and the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they
work as priests in the Holy Place. 42 The Israelites had done all the work in exactly the way
that Yahweh had commanded Moses to have it done. 43 Then Moses examined everything they
had made. Truly, they had done everything exactly as Yahweh had commanded them to do it.
Then Moses blessed the workmen.

40 1 Then Yahweh said to Moses, 2 "Set up the sacred tent where you will meet with me
on the first day of the first month of the year. 3 Put inside it the sacred chest containing the
stone slabs with the Ten Commandments. Hide it by hanging its curtain in front of it. 4 Bring
the table into the sacred tent and neatly organize on it all the things that they made for it. Then
bring in the lampstand and put the lamps up into it. 5 Put the gold altar for burning incense in
front of the sacred chest, and set up the curtain at the entrance of the sacred tent. 6 Put the altar
for burning sacrifices in front of the entrance to the sacred tent where you will meet with me.
7 Put the washbasin between the sacred tent and the altar, and fill it with water. 8 Hang the
curtains around the outside to make the courtyard, and also hang up the courtyard's entrance
curtain.

9 Then take the oil for anointing and put it on the sacred tent and everything that is in it, to
consecrate it all to me. Then it will be dedicated to me. 10 Also put some of the oil on the altar
on which the priests will burn the sacrifices and on all the things that they will use at the altar.
This will consecrate the altar to me. Then it will be scared, dedicated to me. 11 Also put some
of the oil on the washbasin and its base, to consecrate them to me.

12 Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent and wash them with
water. 13 Then set Aaron apart for serving me as a priest by putting his sacred vestments on

him and by pouring oil on him. **14** Also bring Aaron's sons and put their special tunics on them, **15** then pour oil on them just as you did on their father. This will consecrate them to serve me as priests. By pouring oil on them, you will cause them and their descendants to be priests throughout all their future generations."

16 Moses did all these things exactly as Yahweh had commanded him to do.

17 On the first day of the first month of Israel's second year, the people set up the sacred tent. **18** Moses set up the sacred tent, and its bases, frames, crossbars, and posts. **19** He spread out the two layers of coverings over the sacred tent, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **20** Then Moses took the two stone slabs on which Yahweh had written his commandments and put them into the sacred chest. He put the carrying poles into the rings on the chest and put the lid on top of it. **21** Then Moses took the chest into **the Holy Place inside** the sacred tent. He hung the thick curtain to conceal the chest containing the commandments, exactly as Yahweh had commanded him. **22** He set the table inside the sacred tent, on its north side, outside the curtain **that hid the sacred chest**. **23** He laid out the bread neatly on the table to display it before Yahweh, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do. **24** He set the lampstand inside the sacred tent, on the south side, on the opposite side from the table. **25** Then he set the lamps on the lampstand in Yahweh's presence, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **26** He set the gold altar **for burning incense** inside the sacred tent, in front of the curtain **that hid the Most Holy Place**. **27** He burned some sweet-smelling incense on it, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **28** He hung the curtain at the entrance to the sacred tent. **29** At the entrance to the sacred tent where they would meet with Yahweh, he placed the altar for burning sacrifices. Then he sacrificed meat and flour by burning them on it, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **30** He set the washbasin between the sacred tent and the bronze altar, and filled the washbasin with water. **31** Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and feet in the washbasin. **32** Whenever they went into the sacred tent and whenever they came close to the altar, they would wash themselves, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. **33** He hung up **the curtains that** surrounded the sacred tent and the altar and the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. Then Moses was finished building the sacred tent complex.

34 Then the tall cloud covered the sacred tent, and Yahweh's power and brilliant light filled the sacred tent. **35** Because the cloud covered it and Yahweh's light was very bright, Moses was not able to enter the sacred tent. **36** **From that day,** whenever Yahweh's cloud moved off of the sacred, tent the Israelites would **pack their camp** and start traveling. **37** But if the cloud did not move, they stayed where they were and waited for a day that the cloud moved.
38 Wherever the Israelites traveled, Yahweh's cloud was above the sacred tent during the day, and his fire was over it at night. The Israelites could always see **that Yahweh was with them**.

Leviticus

1 **1** Yahweh summoned Moses from the sacred tent. He told him **2** to tell the Israelite people, “When any of you offers an animal to me, Yahweh, you should offer it from your farm animals, from your cattle or from your sheep and goats.

3 If you want to offer a bull as a wholly burned sacrifice, then you should offer a totally healthy male. You should present this animal at the entrance of the sacred tent. When you do, I, Yahweh, will regard it as acceptable. **4** You should place your hands on the head of the bull that the priest will burn completely on the altar. When you do that, I, Yahweh, will accept the animal as an appropriate sacrifice for you, and I will remove your sins from you. **5** You should kill the bull that you want to present in the sacred precincts where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, should take the blood from the bull and splatter it onto every side of the altar that is at the entrance of the sacred tent. **6** You should remove the skin from the bull that you are presenting as a wholly burned sacrifice. Then you should cut the animal into pieces. **7** Then the sons of Aaron, who are priests themselves because Aaron was the first priest, should set burning coals on the altar and place pieces of wood on the coals so that the wood will catch fire. **8** Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, will organize the pieces of the animal that you killed and cut up, including the head and the fat portions, on the wood fire that is burning on the top of the altar. **9** **Before the priest burns up** the stomach and intestines and legs of the animal, you should wash them carefully with water. **Make sure that only clean things go on my altar**. The priest should completely burn every part of the animal on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. This will fulfill the requirements for the wholly burned sacrifice. I, Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke.

10 But if you want to offer a smaller animal as a wholly burned sacrifice, whether a sheep or a goat, then you should offer a totally healthy male. **11** You should kill the sheep or goat that you want to present on the north side of the altar in the sacred precincts where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, should take the blood from the sheep or the goat and splatter it onto every side of the altar. **12** You should then cut the animal into

pieces, including its head and its fat portions. Then the priest should organize those pieces on a wood fire that he builds on the altar. **13** **Before the priest burns up** the stomach, intestines, and legs of the animal, you should wash them with water. **Make sure that only clean things go on my altar.** The priest should present all these portions of the animal to me and completely burn it on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. This will fulfill the requirements for the wholly burned sacrifice. I, Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke.

14 But if you want to offer a bird to me as a wholly burned sacrifice, then you should offer a dove or a pigeon. **15** The priest should bring the bird to the altar, break its neck and twist off its head. Then the priest should completely burn the head on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. Next, the priest should drain the bird's blood on the outer edge of the altar. **16** Then the priest should take out the bird's esophagus, remove all the bird's feathers, and dispose of them on the east side of the altar. The priest should put them where the priests also dispose of the ashes from the fat of other sacrifices. **17** Then the priest should tear the bird open, holding it by its wings, but he should not tear it into two parts. Next, on the wood fire that he builds on the altar, the priest should burn the bird completely in a way that causes smoke to go up. This will fulfill the requirements for the wholly burned sacrifice. I, Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke.

2 **1** Now if you want to offer a grain offering to me, Yahweh, you should offer wheat flour. Pour out some olive oil on it and place incense on top of it. **2** You should bring the offering of wheat flour to Aaron's sons, the priests. A priest should scoop out of your offering a handful of the flour and olive oil, as well as all the incense—as large a handful as he is able to scoop. Then, the priest should burn the portion of your offering that he scooped out with his hand, doing it in a way that causes smoke to go up on the altar. When this happens, I, Yahweh, will consider it to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the offering. **3** The rest of the wheat flour that you offer, as a sacrifice to me, you should preserve for Aaron and his sons. You should consider this portion of the offering as especially set apart for the priests among all the gifts that you offer to me, Yahweh, and that are set apart for me.

4 But if you want to offer grain offering that consists of something that you baked in an oven, you should offer wheat flour that you mixed with olive oil into unleavened cakes. Or you

could offer wheat flour that you shaped into unleavened crackers and coated with olive oil.
5 But if your grain offering consists of something that you pan-fried on a griddle, you should offer wheat flour that you mixed with olive oil into unleavened bread. **6** You should break the offering into pieces and pour out some olive oil onto it. These actions qualify the offering as a grain offering. **7** If your grain offering consists of something that you deep-fried in a pan, you should offer wheat flour that you mixed with olive oil. **8** In any case, you should bring to me, Yahweh, the grain offering that you have made in this way with these ingredients. You should present the offering to the priest. He will bring it to the altar. **9** There he should lift out from the grain offering the portion that he will burn. Then he should burn that handful on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. When this happens, I, Yahweh will consider the offering to be a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke. **10** The rest of the grain offering you should preserve for Aaron and his sons. You should consider this portion of the sacrifice as especially set apart for the priests among all the gifts that you offer to me, Yahweh, and that are set apart for me.

11 You should not burn any gift to me that contains any yeast or any honey on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. Make sure that whenever you offer a grain offering to me, Yahweh, you have prepared it without using yeast. **12** Any offerings to me that contain yeast or honey you should offer as a presentation of the produce of the field that has been harvested first. But do not burn these kinds of grain offerings on the altar so that they go up to me, Yahweh, as pleasant-smelling smoke. **13** Likewise, you should season every grain offering with salt. You should never present a grain offering without the salt, which reminds you of my promises to you. Every grain offering should contain salt that you have also presented to me, Yahweh.

14 But if you want to offer to me a grain offering that consists of the first harvest of ripened grains, do this. Offer the first ripe grains that you harvest, ears of grain in the early stage of ripening that you have roasted over a fire, that is, grains from your first ripened ears of grain that you have crushed. **15** You should pour out some olive oil on these kinds of offerings and you should place incense on them. These kinds of offerings also qualify as grain offerings.
16 The priest should burn the portion of the offering that he scooped out with his handful—the crushed grains and the olive oil, as well as all of the incense—in a way that causes smoke to go up. When this happens, I, Yahweh will consider the offering to be a gift.

3 **1** But if you want to offer a fellowship sacrifice, do this. If you want to offer a bovine, whether the animal is male or female, you should offer a totally healthy animal in the place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **2** You should place your hands on the head of the bovine that you are offering. You should kill that animal in the entrance to the sacred tent. Then the priests, Aaron's sons, should take the blood from the bovine and splatter it onto every side of the altar. **3** And from your fellowship sacrifice, you should offer a gift to me, Yahweh. This gift should consist of the caul fat that covers all the internal organs and all the visceral fat that is attached to the internal organs. **4** This gift should include both kidneys and the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts. It should also include the lobes of the bovine's liver and the kidneys (which you should also remove). **5** Then **one of the priests** descended from Aaron should burn these fat portions and internal organs on the altar in such a way that it causes smoke to go up alongside the wholly burned sacrifices that the priest is burning on the wood fire **that he has built on the altar**. I, Yahweh, will consider this sacrifice a gift, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke.

6 But if you want to offer an animal from your flocks of sheep or goats to me, Yahweh, as a fellowship sacrifice, whether the animal is male or female, you should offer a totally healthy animal. **7** If you want to offer a lamb, you should offer it in the place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **8** You should place your hands on the head of the lamb that you are offering. You should kill it before the sacred tent. Then **one of the priests** descended from Aaron should take the blood from the lamb and splatter it onto every side of the altar. **9** And from your fellowship sacrifice, you should offer a gift to me, Yahweh. This gift should consist of all the sheep's intestinal fat, the entire portion of the tail fat (which you should cut off near the backbone), the caul fat that covers all the internal organs, and all the visceral fat that is attached to the internal organs. **10** Your gift should also include both kidneys, the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts, the lobes of the lamb's liver, and the kidneys (which you should also remove). **11** Then the priest should burn all the fat and the internal organs on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. You should consider this sacrifice as a gift of food for my holy purposes.

12 Likewise, if you want to offer a goat to me, you should offer it in the place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **13** You should place your hands on the head of the goat that

you are offering. You should kill the animal in the entrance to the sacred tent. Then one of the priests descended from Aaron should take the blood from the goat and splatter it onto every side of the altar. 14 And from your sacrifice, you should offer a gift to me, Yahweh. This gift should consist of the caul fat that covers all the internal organs and all the visceral fat that is attached to the internal organs. 15 Your gift should also include both kidneys, the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts, the lobes of the lamb's liver, and the kidneys (which you should also remove). 16 Then the priest should burn all the fat and the internal organs on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. You should consider this sacrifice as a gift of food for my holy purposes, and I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the sacrifice. You should not eat any of this fat, because all of the fat of any animal that you sacrifice belongs exclusively to me.

17 This is an enduring and permanent command that must be observed by you and all your descendants, wherever you happen to live: Because they belong exclusively to me, you must not consume the fat or the blood of any animal that you sacrifice to me."

4 1 Then Yahweh told Moses 2 to tell the Israelite people, "It may happen that someone does wrong against me unintentionally and does something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded my people not to do.

3 It may happen that the high priest himself does wrong against me in a way that brings guilt on the whole people. If this happens, to address the wrongdoing that he has done, the high priest should offer a totally healthy bull to me, Yahweh, as a purifying sacrifice. 4 That priest should bring the bull to the entrance of the sacred tent, to my presence. He should place his hand on the head of the bull that he wants to offer and kill it in the place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. 5 After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl, the high priest should take some of that blood and bring it into the sacred tent. 6 The priest should dip one of his fingers into the blood, and he should flick some of the bull's blood seven times in the direction of the front of the curtain that separates the rest of the sacred tent from the Most Holy Place, where I, Yahweh, live among the people of Israel. 7 Then, in my presence—I, Yahweh, who resides behind the sacred curtain—the priest should drip some of that blood onto the four projected corners of the altar where the priests burn fragrant incense, which is located inside the sacred tent. Next, the priest should pour the rest of the bull's blood onto the base of the

altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices, which is located at the entrance of the sacred tent. **8** The priest should then carefully remove all the fat of the bull that he is offering as a purifying sacrifice. He should remove the caul fat that covers all the internal organs, all the visceral fat that is attached to the internal organs, **9** both kidneys, and the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts. He should also remove the lobes of the bull's liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys, **10** in the same way that you might remove the fat portions and the internal organs from the bovines that you offer as fellowship sacrifices. Then, on the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices, the high priest should burn all these pieces of fat and the internal organs in a way that causes smoke to go up. **11** But all the other parts of the animal, its skin and all its other meat, including the meat on the bull's head and its legs below the knee, its other internal organs, and any excrement— **12** someone else should take all of these remaining parts of the bull outside of the camp. That person should dispose of them in a place that is ceremonially clean, in the place where the priests also dispose of ashes from the fat of other sacrifices **so that the impurities of these pieces do not cause the people to become impure accidentally**. The person who does this should also burn all these remaining parts of the bull in a wood fire that he builds on the place where the priests also dispose of ashes from the fat of other sacrifices.

13 Or it may happen that the whole community of Israel does wrong against me unintentionally and does something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded my people not to do. Even if the community is unaware of the fact that they did wrong, nevertheless, they will be guilty. **14** When they become aware of the wrongdoing that they have done against my commandments, the whole community should offer a bull as a purifying sacrifice. They should bring the bull to the front of the sacred tent. **15** Then the oldest and most respected members of the community should lay their hands on the head of the bull in my presence. One of them should kill the bull in the sacred precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelite people. **16** **After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl,** the high priest should take some of that blood and bring it into the sacred tent. **17** The priest should dip one of his fingers into the blood and, while standing in the precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelite people, he should flick some of the bull's blood seven times in the direction of the front of the curtain that separates the rest of the sacred tent from the Most Holy Place. **18** Then the priest should drip some of that blood onto the four projected corners of the altar that is directly in front of the curtain behind which I, Yahweh, live in the Most Holy

Place. That is the altar which is located inside the sacred tent. Next, the priest should pour the rest of the bull's blood onto the base of the altar where the priests offer sacrifices that they burn completely. That altar is located at the entrance of the sacred tent. **19** The priest should then carefully remove all the fat of the bull, and he should burn it on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. **20** The high priest should prepare this bull in the same way that he would prepare the bull that he would offer as a purifying sacrifice. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the people. I will remove the people's sins from them and forgive them for their unintentional wrongdoing. **21** Then someone should take the remaining parts of the bull outside of the camp and burn them. He should burn them in the same way that a person would burn the remaining parts of the bull that the high priest offered as a purifying sacrifice. This is the way that the community should offer a purifying sacrifice.

22 Or it may happen that a leading member of the community does wrong against me unintentionally and does something that I, Yahweh the God of the people of Israel, specifically commanded my people not to do. If this happens, he will become guilty. **23** When the leader becomes aware of the wrongdoing that he did against my commandments, he should bring a totally healthy male goat **to the sacred precincts where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelite people.** **24** The leader should place his hand on the head of the goat that he wants to offer, and he should kill it in my presence. He should do this in the same place where people would kill the animals that they offer as wholly burned sacrifices. This is the way to offer a purifying sacrifice. **25** **After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl,** the priest should take some of the blood of the animal that the leader sacrificed as an offering to purify him from the impurities of his sin, **dip** one of his fingers into it, and drip some of the blood onto the four projected corners of the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices. Next, the priest should pour the rest of the goat's blood onto the base of the same altar. **26** **After the leader carefully removes the appropriate portions of fat and internal organs,** the priest should burn all the fat of the goat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. He should do this just as he would burn the fat of a fellowship sacrifice. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the leader. I will remove the leader's sins from him and forgive him for his unintentional wrongdoing.

27 Or it may happen that an Israelite **who is not a priest** unintentionally does wrong against me. He may do something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded my people not to do. That

person then will become guilty. **28** When the Israelite becomes aware of the wrongdoing that he did, he should bring a totally healthy female goat as an offering to me to address the wrongdoing that he did. **29** The Israelite should place his hand on the head of the goat that he wants to offer as a purifying sacrifice and kill it in the same place where people would kill the animals that they offer as wholly burned sacrifices. **30** **After catching the draining blood of the bull in a bowl,** the priest should take some of the blood of the goat and dip one of his fingers into it. He should drip some of the blood onto the four projected corners of the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices. Next, the priest should pour the rest of the goat's blood onto the base of the same altar. **31** Then the individual offering the sacrifice should remove all the goat's fat just as he would remove the fat from a goat the he would offer as a fellowship sacrifice. Next, the priest should burn the goat's fat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the individual's sins from him and will forgive him.

32 But if that person wants to bring a lamb as his purifying sacrifice, he should bring a totally healthy female lamb. **33** The person should place his hand on the head of the lamb that he wants to offer as a purifying sacrifice. Once he has done this, he should kill it in the same place where people would kill the animals that they offer as wholly burned sacrifices. **34** **After catching the draining blood of the lamb in a bowl,** the priest should take some of the blood of the animal that the individual wants to offer as a purifying sacrifice. He should **dip** one of his fingers into it and drip some of the blood onto the four projected corners of the altar where the priests offer the wholly burned sacrifices. The priest should pour the rest of the lamb's blood onto the base of the same altar. **35** Then the individual who offers the sacrifice should remove all the lamb's fat just as he would remove the fat of a lamb that he would offer as a fellowship sacrifice. Next, the priest should burn the lamb's fat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up on top of the other gifts that people have offered to me, Yahweh. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I remove from him the person's sins that he has done and will forgive him.

5 **1** It may happen that the community leaders are investigating a crime and have cursed anyone who has information but does not provide it. Perhaps a person saw the crime. Or

perhaps the person only learned about it afterward. Either way, if he hears the curse but does not testify about what he knows, then he has become guilty of sinning

2 Or it may happen that someone touches something impure, whether the impure dead body of a wild animal, the impure dead body of a domesticated animal, or the impure dead body of a swarming, winged insect. Even if the individual was unaware of touching the impure thing, when the person realizes that he has done so, he becomes impure and legally guilty.

3 Or that person might touch something unclean that comes from a human source or any other unclean thing that might cause a person to become unclean. Even if the individual was unaware of touching the unclean thing, when the person realizes that he has done so, he becomes legally guilty.

4 Or it may happen that a person makes a solemn promise carelessly and rashly. It does not matter whether the person made the promise with ill intention or with good intention. This instruction concerns any way in which a person might make a solemn promise carelessly or rashly. Even if the individual was unaware of speaking carelessly or rashly when he made the solemn promise, when he realizes that he has done so, he becomes legally guilty.

5 Whenever anyone becomes guilty in any of these situations, the individual should confess that he has done wrong. **6** Then the individual should bring the required penalty for his guilt to me, Yahweh, to address the wrongdoing that he has committed. **He should bring** a female flock animal, whether a lamb or a kid, as a purifying sacrifice. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the guilt of the person's wrongdoing from him and will forgive him.

7 But if the individual cannot afford a sheep or a goat, then he should bring two doves or two pigeons to me, Yahweh, as the required penalty for the guilt that he acquired through the wrongdoing that he committed. The priest will offer one of the birds as a purifying sacrifice and the other bird as a wholly burned sacrifice. **8** The individual should bring these two birds to the priest. The priest should first present the bird that will offer as a purifying sacrifice. He should break its neck and twist its head by pinching the bird behind its neck. However, the priest should not remove the head completely. **9** Then the priest should splatter some of the blood of this first bird on the side of the altar. Next, the priest should wring out any remaining blood of the bird on the base of the altar. This is the way to offer a bird as a purifying sacrifice.

10 Then the priest should prepare the second bird as a wholly burned sacrifice, according to the instructions that I have commanded. When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove from him the guilt that the individual acquired through the wrongdoing that he has done, and I will forgive that individual for his wrongdoing.

11 But if the individual cannot afford the two doves or the two pigeons, then he should bring about two liters of wheat flour as his offering for the wrongdoing that he committed. This offering of wheat flour will serve as a restoring sacrifice. The individual should not pour any oil onto it, nor should he put a lump of incense on it, because it is intended to be a purifying sacrifice. **12** The individual should bring the wheat flour to the priest. Then, taking as large a handful as he is able, the priest should scoop out of the offering the portion that he will burn. The priest should then burn that portion on the altar, on top of the other gifts that individuals have offered to me, Yahweh, doing it in a way that causes smoke to go up. This is the way to offer wheat flour as a purifying sacrifice. **13** When this happens, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the guilt of the individual's wrongdoing from him that he acquired through the wrongdoing that he committed regarding these specific situations. Then, I will forgive the individual for his wrongdoing. The portion of the wheat flour that is not burned completely on the altar belongs to the priest **for food** just like the remaining portions of grain offerings."

14 Then Yahweh told Moses, **15** "It may happen that someone breaks one of the commandments that I have given to the people of Israel and unintentionally desecrates the sacred space where I live or the sacred items that are devoted to me, Yahweh. If that happens, that individual should bring the required penalty for his guilt to me, Yahweh. **He should bring** a totally healthy goat as a restoring sacrifice. The individual should determine the worth of the goat in silver according to the official standard for the weight of silver that priests dedicate to me in the sacred tent. **16** The individual should also repay the value of the sacred item that he desecrated. He should add one-fifth of the value of that sacred object to his sacrifice and give the full amount of silver to the priest. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer the ram that the individual is offering as a restoring sacrifice. The priest will offer this sacrifice in a way that I will accept for the sake of the individual. And I will remove the guilt of the individual's wrongdoing from him. I will also forgive the individual for his unintentional wrongdoing.

17 Or it may happen that someone does wrong against me and does something that I, Yahweh, specifically commanded that my people not to do. Even if the individual did not know that he had done wrong, nonetheless, he has become legally guilty. He is responsible for his guilt. **18** The individual should bring a totally healthy male goat to the priest in order to offer a restoring sacrifice. He should also determine its value in silver. When this happens, the priest will be able to offer a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual. I will remove the guilt of the individual's unintentional wrongdoing that he committed (even though he himself did not know that he had done wrong). Then, I will forgive the individual for his wrongdoing. **19** This is how an individual should offer a restoring sacrifice. That person is certainly legally guilty in my eyes."

6 **1** Then Yahweh told Moses, **2** "It may happen that a person does wrong and breaks one of the commandments that I, Yahweh, have given to the people of Israel. He might deceive another Israelite by failing to fulfill an oath that he swore he would keep by receiving a deposit or a pledge. Or **he might deceive another Israelite** by stealing his property or by extorting money from him. **3** Or **he might mistreat another Israelite** by finding someone's lost property and then lying about it. If someone does any of these various things that people do wrong, he has taken an oath falsely. **4** If this happens, when the person does wrong in any of these ways and becomes guilty, then he should first return the property that he stole or repay the money that he extorted from another Israelite. Or **if he received a deposit,** he should return the deposit that another Israelite gave to him as a sign that he would fulfill the oath between them. Or **if he found someone's lost property,** he should return the lost property. **5** This same principle applies for any other way in which a person might swear an oath falsely. That person should restore the full monetary value of whatever he has stolen or found or the amount that he withheld. Moreover, he should add a fifth of that monetary value to the total amount. He should give the money to whomever the amount properly belongs on the day that he recognizes that he is guilty of wrongdoing. **6** Then, to the precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites, that individual should bring an animal to sacrifice. He should offer the animal as a purifying sacrifice. To offer this sacrifice, he should bring a totally healthy male ram to the priest from the flock animals that he owns. He should also determine its monetary value in silver. **7** When this happens, the priest will be able to offer in my presence a sacrifice that I, Yahweh, will accept for the sake of the individual. And I will remove the guilt of the

individual's wrongdoing. I will also forgive the individual for whatever way he becomes guilty out of all the ways that people acquire guilt."

8 Then Yahweh told Moses, **9** "Make sure that Aaron and his sons know that this is the way that a person should offer a wholly burned sacrifice. This kind of sacrifice must remain on the burning fire that is on the altar throughout the entire night. You should make sure that the fire on the altar is always burning. **10** **In the morning,** make sure that the priest puts on his linen coat and that he wears his linen undergarments on his bare skin. Then he should remove the ashes from the fat of other sacrifices that have accumulated where the fire has totally burned the sacrifices that are left on the altar. The priest should put the ashes in a pile beside the altar. **11** After he has done this, the priest should remove those sacred linen clothes and put on other, everyday clothes. Then he should take the ashes outside of the camp and dispose of them in a place that is ceremonially clean. **This is so that the impurities of these parts of the animal do not cause the people to become impure accidentally**. **12** Now, make sure that the fire on the altar is always burning. It must never go out. Rather, each and every morning, the priest should put more firewood on the fire. Then he should arrange more offerings on the fire. He should burn the fat of the fellowship sacrifices on that fire, doing it in a way that causes smoke to go up. **13** Make sure that the fire on the altar is continually burning. Remember, it must never go out!

14 And this is the way a person should offer a grain offering. The descendants of Aaron who are priests should present this kind of sacrifice in the precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites, in front of the altar **that is at the entrance of the sacred tent**. **15** Then, with as large a handful as he can pick up, the priest should scoop out of the offering a handful of the wheat flour with its olive oil, as well as all the incense that is on the offering. The priest should burn the portion of the offering that he scooped out with his hand. He should burn it in a way that causes smoke to go up on the altar. I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the offering. **16** Aaron and his sons who are priests may eat the rest of the grain offerings that you offer to me, to Yahweh. They should eat any unleavened loaf of bread in a sacred place, inside the courtyard of the sacred tent. **17** Make sure that no one offers a grain offering that consists of a loaf of bread that he made with leaven. I have given this part of the grain offerings to the priests as their portion of the gifts that people offer to me. Out of all those gifts, the portion of the sacrifice that the priests keep for themselves for food is specially set apart. It is separated from all the sacred gifts that people offer to me, just like the priests' portions of the purifying sacrifices and the priests' portions of the restoring sacrifices. **18** Any

male descendant of Aaron may eat these portions of the sacrifices. In fact, this practice is a permanent and enduring part of the portion of the gifts that people offer to me, to Yahweh, which belongs to the priests for every generation of the people of Israel. **These gifts are so sacred that** whoever or whatever touches them becomes just as sacred as the gifts themselves."

19 Then Yahweh told Moses, **20** "On the day when one of the male descendants of Aaron is consecrated as a priest, this is what he should offer. He should present to me, to Yahweh, about two liters of wheat flour, constituting a grain offering that will always be in my presence. **He should bring** half of the wheat flour in the morning and half of the wheat flour in the evening. **21** The priest who offers the grain offering should pan-fry the wheat flour on a griddle in olive oil after having combined it with the oil. He should then offer the broken pieces of the offering. **He should burn them on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up so that** I, Yahweh, will enjoy the smell of the smoke of the offering. **22** The high priest who is in line to succeed the current high priest should perform the grain offering in this way. These instructions are a permanent and enduring regulation. Make sure that the priests burn these kinds of sacrifices in their entirety in a way that causes smoke to go up to me, to Yahweh. **23** The priests should offer every part of these grain offerings. No priest should eat any portion of this particular sacrifice."

24 Then Yahweh told Moses **25** to tell Aaron and his sons, "This is the way a person should offer a purifying sacrifice. The individual should kill the animal that an individual selects for this kind of sacrifice at the same place where individuals kill the animals that someone might offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. This location is within the precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. Aaron and his descendants should consider this kind of sacrifice as specially set apart for the priests among all the sacred offerings that people offer to me that are set apart for me. **26** The priest who performs the purifying sacrifice may eat its meat. However, the priest should only eat it in the place in the courtyard of the sacred tent that the priests have set apart for such sacred acts. **27** **The meat of these sacrifices is so sacred that** whoever or whatever touches the meat of the sacrifice becomes just as sacred as the meat itself. And whoever splatters the blood of the purifying sacrifice on any clothing should wash the spots where the blood came into contact with the clothing. They should wash their clothing in a location that the priests have set apart for such sacred acts. **28** If the priest boils the meat of the purifying sacrifice in a pot made from clay, the priest must smash the pot afterward. However, if the priest boils the meat in a bronze pot, the priest may

thoroughly scrub the pot with scalding water and rinse the pot with water. **29** Any male in a priest's family may eat the boiled meat of the purifying sacrifice. The people should consider that meat to be especially set apart for the priests out of all the gifts that people offer to me, to Yahweh, which are set apart for me. **30** But there is one kind of sacrifice that neither the priests nor their family members should eat. Instead, the priests should completely burn such a sacrifice over the fire. They should not eat any purifying sacrifice that requires the priest to bring some of the blood of the animal into the sacred tent. The priest does this in the sacred space that priests have set apart for such sacred acts in order to offer a sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of an individual.

7 **1** This is the way a person should offer the restoring sacrifice. The people of Israel should consider this kind of sacrifice as especially set apart among all the sacred offerings that people offer to me that are set apart for me. **2** The people who offer this kind of sacrifice should kill the animal they are presenting in the same place where people might kill the animals people offer as wholly burned sacrifices. Then **after catching the animal's blood in a bowl, the priest** should splatter the blood onto every side of the altar. **3** The individual should present all of the fat that he removed from the animal: the entire portion of the tail fat, the caul fat that covers all the internal organs, **4** both kidneys, and the suet fat that is attached to them near the loin cuts. He should also present the lobes of the lamb's liver, and the kidneys (which the individual should also remove). **5** Then the priest should burn all these portions of fat and internal organs on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. Once burned, the fat and the internal organs will become gifts to me, to Yahweh. This is how an individual should offer a restoring sacrifice **6** Any male descendant of Aaron may eat the meat that comes from this sacrifice. However, he should eat it in a place set apart for such purposes. The people of Israel should consider this kind of sacrifice as especially set apart for the priests among all the sacred offerings that people offer to me that are set apart for me.

7 The instructions for the restoring sacrifice are just the same as the instructions for the purifying sacrifice. There is one set of instructions for both of them. The meat of the sacrifice belongs to the priest who offers the sacrifice that I will accept for the sake of the individual so that I will remove the individual's sins from him and forgive him for his wrongdoing. **8** As for the priest who offers a wholly burned sacrifice for someone, the skin of the animal that the individual offered belongs to the priest. **9** Every grain offering that someone bakes in an oven,

and every sacrifice that someone prepares by deep-frying in a pan or by pan-frying on a griddle also belongs to the priest who offered it for food. It will be his food. **10** Likewise, both the grain offering with olive oil and those without any olive oil belong to every male descendant of Aaron. Every priest is alike in this regard.

11 This is how someone should offer any fellowship sacrifice that he wants to offer to me. **12** Someone might want to offer a fellowship sacrifice to express gratitude to me. If so, he should present unleavened loaves of bread that someone made from flour that he mixed with olive oil or unleavened loaves of bread that someone made from fine wheat flour that he mixed with olive oil and coated with oil, a cake soaked with oil. He should present those loaves in addition to the animal sacrifices that accompany the fellowship sacrifices that express gratitude to me. **13** Along with those leavened loaves of bread and the animal sacrifices that regularly accompany any fellowship sacrifice for the purpose of expressing gratitude to me, the individual should offer this grain offering. **14** And from those portions of the sacrifice, the individual should offer a portion of the whole sacrifice as a special contribution to me, to Yahweh. These portions will belong to the priest who splatters the blood of the fellowship sacrifice. It will be his food. **15** As for the meat of the fellowship sacrifice that someone offers for the purpose of expressing gratitude to me, the priests should eat the meat on the same day that the individual offers it. The priests must not allow any of the meat to remain until the next morning.

16 Someone might want to offer a fellowship sacrifice because of a vow that he made to me. Or someone might also want to bring a fellowship sacrifice freely and unprompted. In either case, the priests should eat the meat of the sacrifice on the day that the individual offers the sacrifice. The priests may also eat the remaining meat of the sacrifice throughout the next day. **17** However, the priests must completely burn any remaining meat from the sacrifice on the third day. **18** If, for whatever reason, anyone ever eats the meat from a fellowship sacrifice on the third day after an individual offered it, I will no longer accept whatever sacrifice the individual offered. As for the person who offered the sacrifice, I will not forgive him, because the meat is now considered desecrated. Whoever eats that meat must now be held responsible for addressing his wrongdoing.

19 No one should ever eat any meat that comes into contact with anything unclean. The people of Israel should always completely burn contaminated meat. However, anyone who is

able to remain clean can eat clean meat. **20** Anyone who has not been able to remain ceremonially clean and still, nonetheless, eats the meat of a fellowship sacrifice, that meat that belongs to me, to Yahweh, alone, that person is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people. **21** Likewise, anyone who comes into contact with anything impure, whether an impure person or an impure domesticated animal or anything impure that I consider to be disgusting and, nonetheless, eats some of the meat of a fellowship sacrifice, the meat that belongs to me, to Yahweh, alone, that person is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people."

22 Then Yahweh told Moses **23** to say to the Israelite people, "The people of Israel should never eat any of the fat of bovines or sheep or goats. **24** As for the fat from an animal's corpse or the fat from an animal that wild animals killed and someone later found it dead, anyone may use these portions of fat for various purposes. However, no one should ever eat this fat. **25** If ever anyone eats the fat from these domesticated animals that people use to offer gifts to me, to Yahweh, that person who ate the fat is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people. **26** And wherever you happen to live, no one should ever eat any blood, whether from a bird or from a domesticated animal. **27** If ever any individual eats any blood, that person is now an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people."

28 Then Yahweh told Moses, **29** to say to the Israelite people, "Anyone who offers a fellowship sacrifice to me, to Yahweh, should bring part of that sacrifice directly to my presence. **30** He himself should bring the gift that he is offering to me. He should bring the fat along with the meat of the animal's breast in order to fan it in my presence as a special contribution to me. **31** Then the priest should burn the fat of the animal's breast meat on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. However, the breast meat itself belongs to Aaron and to his male descendants for food. **32** And, as a special contribution, the person offering the fellowship sacrifice should give the animal's right thigh to the priest who performed the sacrifice. **33** The right thigh belongs to whichever priest, being a male descendant of Aaron, presented the blood and the fat of the fellowship sacrifice. It is his share of food. **34** For, by instructing the people of God to offer sacrifices in this manner, I have taken the breast meat of the sacrifice that the priest fans in my presence and the special contribution of the right thigh from the people of Israel, from their fellowship sacrifices, and I have given these special

portions to Aaron the priest and to his male descendants. These instructions teach that the people of Israel should always provide portion of food for the priests."

35 Those are the allotments that belong to Aaron and the allotments that belong to his male descendants from the gifts that people offer to Yahweh. Yahweh commanded these instructions on the day that Moses presented Aaron and his sons to serve as priests to Yahweh. **36** Yahweh made sure to give these instructions and regulations to the priests on the day that Moses anointed them and set them apart from the people of Israel. These portions of the sacrifices are a permanent and enduring regulation that the people of Israel and all their descendants should always observe.

37 So, those are the ways in which people should offer the wholly burned sacrifices, the grain offerings, the purifying sacrifices, the restoring sacrifices, the appointing sacrifices, and the fellowship sacrifices. **38** Yahweh made sure that Moses received all these instructions and regulations on Mount Sinai on the day that Yahweh commanded the people of Israel to begin offering their sacrifices to Yahweh in the desert wilderness around Sinai.

8 **1** Then Yahweh told Moses, **2** "Bring Aaron and his sons, their special clothes, the oil that you will use to anoint them, the bull that you will offer as a purifying offering, the two rams that you will also offer, and a basket that contains some bread that you have baked without leaven. **3** Then gather all the people together at the entrance to the sacred tent."
4 Moses did exactly what Yahweh told him to do, and all the people gathered together at the entrance of the sacred tent.

5 Then Moses said to the whole people, "This is what Yahweh has told us to do." **6** Moses then brought forth Aaron and his sons, and he washed them thoroughly. **7** Moses put the embroidered tunic on Aaron, tied the waistband around him, and clothed him with the outer garment and the priests' sacred apron. He tied the carefully woven belt of the sacred apron around him, and so, clothed him in the priests' sacred clothing. **8** He placed the chest pouch that attaches to the apron on Aaron's chest and put into it the **two stones called** the Urim and the Thummim. **9** Then Moses wrapped the turban around Aaron's head and fastened the golden flower-shaped plate, that sacred crown that demonstrates that Aaron serves Yahweh alone, to the front of the turban, exactly as Yahweh told Moses to do.

10 Then Moses took the olive oil that he was to use for dedicating people and objects to Yahweh, and he poured it out on the sacred tent and everything that was in it. By doing this, he set the entire space and everything in it apart and dedicated them wholly to Yahweh and his purposes. **11** Then Moses flicked some of the sacred oil on the altar seven times. He anointed the altar and all the tools that accompanied the altar, its washbasin, and its stand so that he could dedicate them wholly to Yahweh and his purposes. **12** He poured out on Aaron's head some of the sacred olive oil that he was to use to dedicate people and objects wholly to Yahweh and so, he anointed him in order to set him apart and dedicate him wholly to Yahweh and to his purposes. **13** Then Moses brought forth Aaron's sons, and he clothed them with the embroidered tunics, tied the waistbands around them, and wrapped the headbands on their heads, exactly as Yahweh told Moses to do.

14 Then Moses brought into the sacred tent the bull that he would offer as a purifying offering. Aaron and his sons placed their hands on the animal's head. **15** Then Aaron and his sons killed the bull, **and, after collecting some of its blood in a bowl,** Moses took the blood, and, using his finger, put some of it on every one of the four projected corners of the altar. By doing this, Moses purified the altar from the impurity of sin. The rest of the blood Moses poured out on the base of the altar, and so, he set the altar apart and dedicated it as a suitable place on which to offer sacrifices that would remove people's sins from them and restore them to relationship with Yahweh. **16** Then Moses took all the visceral fat that was attached to the internal organs, the lobes of the bull's liver, the two kidneys, and their suet fat. He completely burned these internal organs and fat portions on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. **17** Another Israelite then completely burned the rest of the bull that Aaron and his sons had killed, including its skin, its other internal organs, and its excrement at a **clean place** outside the camp, exactly as Yahweh told Moses to do.

18 Then Moses presented the ram that he was going to offer as a wholly burned sacrifice, and Aaron and his sons placed their hands on its head. **19** Then, Aaron and his sons killed the ram, and Moses, **after collecting some of the ram's blood in a bowl,** flicked some of the blood on every side of the altar. **20** After Aaron and his sons cut the ram into its appropriate portions, Moses burned the head, the portions of meat, and all the suet of the bull on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. **21** But the internal organs and the legs of the bull Aaron and his sons thoroughly washed before Moses also burned these on the altar in the same manner. In

doing so, Moses fulfilled the requirements for offering a wholly burned sacrifice. Yahweh enjoyed the smell of the smoke, and he considered the sacrifice to be a gift, exactly as he had told Moses to do.

22 Then Moses presented the second ram, the one that Moses would offer to appoint the priests and dedicate them as priests to Yahweh, and Aaron and his sons placed their hands on its head. **23** Aaron and his sons slaughtered the ram. After Moses **caught some of its blood in a bowl,** he took the blood and daubed some of it on Aaron—on the lobe of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. **24** Moses then took Aaron's sons and did the same, daubing blood on them as well. **He did this to set their ears, their hands, and their feet apart for service to Yahweh alone.** Then Moses splashed the remaining blood on every side of the altar. **25** Moses took the intestinal fat of the ram, including the tail fat and all the visceral that was attached to the intestines. He also took the lobes of the ram's liver, the two kidneys and their suet fat, and the right thigh. **26** Then Moses took a loaf of unleavened bread, a loaf of unleavened bread that he had covered in olive oil, and a cracker from the basket that was in Yahweh's presence. He put these items on the fat portions and the right thigh of the ram that Aaron and his sons had killed. **27** Moses placed all of these sacrifices into the upturned, open hands of Aaron and his sons, who held them up and moved them about in Yahweh's presence. **28** Then Moses took all those things from the upturned, open hands of Aaron and his sons, and completely burned them on the altar, on top of the sacrifices that Moses was already burning, in a way that caused smoke to go up. By offering these items in this way, the sacrifice fulfilled the requirements for the appointing sacrifice. Yahweh enjoyed the smell of the smoke, and he considered this sacrifice to be a gift to him. **29** Moses then also took the breast meat from the second ram that Aaron and his sons offered as an appointing sacrifice. He held it up and moved it about in Yahweh's presence in the precincts of the sacred tent as a special contribution to Yahweh. The breast meat belonged to Moses as his allotted share of food, exactly as Yahweh told Moses.

30 Next, Moses took some of the olive oil that he used for anointing Aaron and his sons, and some of the blood that he had previously placed on the altar. He flicked both the blood and the olive oil on Aaron and his sons and on all their clothes **in order to cleanse them from the impurity of sin**. By doing this, he set apart Aaron, his sons, and all their clothing for service to Yahweh and dedicated them wholly to Yahweh.

31 Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons, “Boil the meat of the second ram at the
entrance of the sacred tent. You should eat it there with the bread that is in the basket that you
are using for the appointing sacrifice, exactly as I told you to do when I said that Aaron and his
sons should eat the bread and the meat of the ram. 32 Make sure you completely burn any of
the meat and bread that remains after you are finished eating. 33 You should not leave the
entrance of the sacred tent for seven days, until the day when your appointing ceremony is
over. You should do this because Yahweh will give you the responsibilities of the priesthood
over the course of the seven-day period. 34 Yahweh told you to do all these things exactly as
you have done them today in order to restore you to relationship with Yahweh. 35 Again, make
sure you remain in the entrance of the sacred tent from day to night for an entire week and
carefully avoid exactly what Yahweh has told you to avoid. If you are careful to do this,
Yahweh will not kill you, because Yahweh himself told me to do these things.”

36 So, Aaron and his sons did everything that Yahweh told them through Moses.

9 1 Eight days later, Moses summoned Aaron, his sons, and the oldest and most respected
people of Israel. 2 He said to Aaron, “Take a totally healthy calf from the domesticated bulls
that you own and offer it as a purifying sacrifice along with a totally healthy ram that you will
offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. Present these animals to Yahweh. 3 Then tell the Israelite
people to take a male goat and offer it as a purifying sacrifice, along with a calf and a lamb that
they will offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. Tell them to make sure that both animals are a year
old and totally healthy. 4 Also tell the Israelite people to take an ox and a ram and offer them
as fellowship sacrifices when they sacrifice in Yahweh’s presence. They should offer these
animals along with a grain offering that consists of wheat flour that they have combined with
olive oil. Tell them that they should bring these offerings because Yahweh himself is going to
appear to them today.”

5 **After Aaron relayed these instructions to the Israelite people,** the people brought before the
sacred tent everything that Moses told them to bring. Then all the people presented the animals
and the offerings, and they stood together in Yahweh’s presence. 6 Then Moses said, “This is
exactly what Yahweh told you to do. Now you will see how glorious he is.”

7 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Approach the altar and perform the purifying sacrifice and
the wholly burned sacrifice that Yahweh told you to offer. Do this so that Yahweh will remove
your sins from you and restore you and the people to relationship with him. Then perform the
sacrifices that Yahweh told the people to offer. Do this so that Yahweh will remove the peoples’
sins from them and restore them to relationship with him. Perform these sacrifices exactly as
Yahweh instructed.”

8 So Aaron approached the altar and killed the calf that he would offer as a purifying
sacrifice **to cleanse the holy space dedicated to Yahweh from the impurity of his own sin**. 9 Then,
after they collected some of the calf’s blood in a bowl, Aaron’s sons presented the blood to their
father. Aaron dipped one of his fingers into the blood and applied some of it to the four
projections on the corners of the altar. He poured the rest of the blood onto the base of the altar.
10 He then burned the calf’s fat, including the kidneys and the lobe of the liver of the calf that
Aaron sacrificed as a purifying sacrifice, on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up
Aaron did this exactly as Yahweh told Moses. 11 But someone else completely burned the rest
of the calf’s meat and its skin **at a clean place** outside of the camp.

12 Then Aaron killed the ram that he was going to offer as a wholly burned sacrifice. **After
collecting some of the blood of the ram,** his sons brought him some of the blood, and he
splattered it on every side of the altar. 13 Then, **after cutting the ram into its appropriate
portions,** Aaron’s sons brought him the appropriate portions of the ram’s meat, fat, and internal
organs, including the animal’s head. Aaron burned them on the altar in a way that caused
smoke to go up. 14 Then Aaron washed the ram’s intestines and legs, and he burned them on
the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. He placed them on top of the other portions of
the sacrifices that he was already burning on the altar.

15 Then Aaron brought the animals that the Israelite people offered to Yahweh. He took the
goat that the people required for their purifying sacrifice, and he killed it. By offering it, Aaron
cleansed the people from the impurity of their sin, just as he had done with the goat that he
offered for himself.

16 In this way, he presented the animal that the people required for their sacrifice. Aaron
offered this sacrifice in the way that Yahweh had instructed Moses. 17 Then Aaron presented
the offering that consisted of a sacrifice of harvested grain. He took a handful of it and burned

it on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up, in addition to the animal sacrifices that he had prepared and completely burned on the altar in the morning.

18 Then Aaron killed the ox and the ram that the Israelite people required for their sacrifice that promised friendship with Yahweh. **After catching some of the blood of the animals,** his sons brought him the blood, and he flicked the blood against every side of the altar. **19** He took the fat portions from the ox and the ram, including their fatty tails, their visceral fat that was attached to the animals' internal organs, their kidneys, and the lobes of their livers. **20** Then his sons placed all these portions of fat and internal organs on top of the breast meat of those animals, and Aaron burned these portions on the altar in a way that caused smoke to go up. **21** Next, Aaron fanned the breast meat and the right thigh of those animals in Yahweh's presence, exactly as Yahweh told Moses.

22 When he had finished offering all the sacrifices, Aaron lifted his hands over the people, and he asked Yahweh to bless them. Then, he came down from the altar where he had offered the purifying sacrifices, the wholly burned sacrifices, and the fellowship sacrifices that he and the people had required.

23 Then Moses and Aaron entered into the Holy Place in the sacred tent. When they came out later, they asked Yahweh to bless the people again. When they did this, all the people saw how glorious Yahweh was. **24** Fire came out from the sacred precincts, where Yahweh lived among the Israelites, and completely burned everything that was on the altar, including the wholly burned offerings and all the portions of fat. When all the people saw this happen, they shouted joyfully and bowed themselves down on the ground to worship Yahweh.

10 **1** Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took the pans in which they burned incense. They put some burning coals in them and put incense on top of the coals. They offered this fire **and incense** to Yahweh, **but the fire was not acceptable to Yahweh because** it was not the kind that he had commanded them to burn. **2** Flames shot out from the precincts of the sacred tent where Yahweh lived among the Israelites, and the fire burned up Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu. The fire killed them right in Yahweh's presence. **3** Moses turned and said to Aaron, "These events are exactly what Yahweh spoke of when he said,

'In the presence of the holy priests who draw near to me,

I will demonstrate that I am set apart from everything else;
in the sight of everyone,
I will demonstrate that I should always be honored and worshiped.'"

But Aaron was silent and said nothing.

4 So Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, Aaron's cousins, the sons of Aaron's uncle, Uzziel. Moses said to them, "Offer yourselves for service and carry the corpses of your relatives from the front of the Holy Place in the sacred tent. Bring them to a place outside the camp." **5** So Aaron's cousins stepped forward and carried the two corpses of Aaron's sons in the folds of their embroidered tunics. They carried them to a place outside the camp, exactly as Moses told them to do.

6 Then Moses said to Aaron and his two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not mourn for your brothers as is customary. You should not allow your hair to hang down, nor should you tear your clothing. If you do, Yahweh may also kill you, and his anger may extend to the whole congregation as well. However, your fellow Israelites, every single person, should mourn because Yahweh is angry with his priests, as his burning fire has demonstrated.
7 However, make sure that you do not leave the entrance of the sacred tent. If you do so, Yahweh will kill you too. You should not forget that when I poured Yahweh's holy oil on your heads, Yahweh set you apart to serve him here." So, Aaron and his remaining sons did everything that Moses told them to do.

8 Then Yahweh said to Aaron, **9** "You and your two sons who are still alive should not drink wine or beer before you enter the sacred tent. If you drink alcohol before you enter the sacred precincts where Yahweh lives among the Israelites, Yahweh will kill you. This practice is a permanent and enduring instruction for how the priests should behave, which applies to every generation of the people of Israel. **10** As priests, you should learn how to distinguish what is set apart for Yahweh and his purposes from that which you may use for everyday, common purposes. You will also be able to distinguish what is unacceptable to Yahweh and unclean from that which is acceptable to Yahweh and clean. **11** By learning how to distinguish these things from one another, the whole people of Israel will learn how to follow all the instructions that I told Moses, who then told them to you."

12 Moses then said to Aaron and his remaining two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, “Take whatever grain offering now remains after Aaron has burned the gifts that he offered to Yahweh on the altar and eat the unleavened loaves of bread next to the altar. You should eat it here because these leftovers are set apart for the priests among all the gifts that people offer to Yahweh and that are set apart for him. **13** Make sure that you eat these leftovers in the place that priests have dedicated for such purposes. You should do this because these leftovers are the food that Yahweh has provided for you and for your children from all the gifts that people offer to Yahweh that are also set apart for himself. It is so because Yahweh has told me that this is what you should do. **14** You and your children may eat the breast meat that was held up and moved about in Yahweh’s presence and the meat of the right thigh that people have offered as a special contribution to Yahweh. You and your children should eat these portions of meat in any place that the priests have set apart for such holy purposes. Yahweh has given them to you and to your children as your portion of food that comes from the fellowship sacrifices that people offer to Yahweh. **15** In addition to the other fat portions that people offer to Yahweh, the priests should bring the meat of the right thigh that people have offered as a special contribution to Yahweh and the breast meat to hold them up and move them about in Yahweh’s presence. Remember that these portions of meat are food for you and for your children. These instructions should be perpetual and enduring, exactly as Yahweh has told you to do.”

16 After asking about the location of the goat that the priests had offered as a purifying sacrifice, Moses diligently looked for it. He discovered that the priests had mistakenly burned it completely on the altar when they ought to have eaten it. So Moses was very angry with Aaron’s two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, and asked them, **17** “Why did you not eat the meat of the purifying sacrifice in a location that the priests have set apart for such holy purposes? You should have considered that meat to be specifically dedicated for you among all the gifts that people offer to Yahweh that are also set apart for him! Yahweh gave that meat to you not only so that you could eat it, but also so that it would address the wrongdoing of the whole congregation. When you ate that meat in Yahweh’s presence, he was going to forgive the whole congregation for their sins and restore their relationship with him! **18** Consider this: the sacrifice was not the type of purifying sacrifice that required the priest to bring any blood into the inner portion of the Holy Place in the sacred tent! You should certainly have eaten it in the place that the priests have set apart for such holy purposes, exactly as I told you to do!”

19 But Aaron replied, “Consider this: today, my sons brought their purifying sacrifices and
their wholly burned sacrifices to Yahweh in the precincts where he lives among the Israelite
people. Yet, nonetheless, these horrible things have happened to me! Even if I myself had eaten
the meat of the purifying sacrifice today, would Yahweh have approved of everything that has
happened here today, even the death of my sons?” 20 When Moses heard Aaron’s response, he
was satisfied and said nothing further.

11 1 Then Yahweh spoke to Aaron and Moses. He said, 2 “Tell the people of Israel that,
out of all the animals that live on dry land, the following animals are the ones that they may
eat. 3 This is the rule: any animal that has hooves (and those hooves are completely cloven)
and also rechews partially digested food—these are the types of animals that are acceptable to
eat.

4 However, there are some animals that have one of these traits but not both. These types
of animals are not acceptable to eat. For example, camels are not acceptable to eat because,
while they chew the cud, they do not have a completely cloven hoof. The people of Israel
should consider any animal like this to be impure and unacceptable for eating. 5 Likewise,
rock badgers are not acceptable to eat because, while they rechew partially digested food, they
do not have completely cloven hooves, because they do not have hooves at all. The people of
Israel should also consider any animal like this to be impure and unacceptable to eat. 6 Rabbits
also are unacceptable to eat because, while they rechew partially digested food, they do not
have completely cloven hooves, because they also do not have hooves at all. The people of Israel
should also consider any animal like a rabbit to be impure and unacceptable to eat. 7 Pigs are
likewise unacceptable to eat because, while they have hooves (and those hooves are
completely cloven), they do not bring up the cud. Because of this, the people of Israel should
also consider any animal like a pig to be impure and not acceptable to eat. 8 No Israelite
should ever eat any meat from these animals. They should not even touch their dead bodies.
Rather, the people of Israel should consider all of these types of animals to be impure and
unacceptable to eat.

9 Now, out of all the types of creatures that live in water, these are the ones that the people
of Israel may eat. This is the rule: The people of Israel may eat anything that lives in water that
has both fins and scales, whether in the ocean or in a freshwater stream. 10 However, there are

many animals that live in the ocean or in freshwater streams but do not have both fins and scales. Whether they are smaller, swarming creatures or larger ones, these types of creatures should disgust the people of Israel. They should consider them to be completely unacceptable to eat. **11** Because these creatures should disgust the people of Israel, the people of Israel should never eat meat from any of these creatures. Their dead bodies should also disgust them. **12** Once again, **this is the rule:** the people of Israel should consider any creature that lives in the water but does not have both fins and scales to be disgusting. They should consider this kind of animal to be completely unacceptable to eat.

13-14 Now, these are some examples of the types of birds that should disgust the people of Israel. They should never eat these birds but rather consider them disgusting. These birds include predatory birds of large to medium size that sometimes eat dead animals. **15-19** In addition to those types of birds of prey, such as hawks **the people of Israel should consider disgusting** all birds that inhabit desolate places. These might include birds such as owls, ostriches, and even bats. Likewise, the people of Israel should avoid certain waterbirds of large to medium size, specifically those that wade or hunt in water. Finally, any birds that occupy or hunt near excrement, such as hoopoes, should disgust the people of Israel. **These are the types of birds that the people of Israel should consider completely unacceptable for eating.**

20 The people of Israel should also consider any kind of flying insect that swarms and has four legs to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat. **21** However, the people of Israel may eat any flying insect that both swarms and has four legs, if its legs are jointed and the insect jumps about on the ground. **22** For example, these are some examples of the types of insects that the people of Israel may eat. They may eat any kind of locust, any kind of bald locust, any kind of cricket, and any kind of grasshopper. **23** But the people of Israel should consider any other winged insect that swarms and also has four legs to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat.

24 These types of unacceptable and impure animals and insects will make the people of Israel impure. Anyone who touches their dead bodies will make themself impure **so that they cannot touch sacred objects or enter into holy space** until the evening of the day when they touched one of these animals or insects. **25** Anyone who picks up one of their dead bodies should wash his clothes to purify himself from the impurity of the dead animal or insect. That

person will be impure **and should not touch sacred objects or enter into holy space** until the evening of the day when he touched the dead animal or insect.

26 Remember, the people of Israel should consider impure and unacceptable any animal that, while having hooves, does not have completely cloven hooves or does not also chew the cud. Anyone who touches one of these animals will make themself impure as well.
27 Likewise, out of all the animals that have four legs, the people of Israel should consider any animal that has paws to be impure and unacceptable to eat. Anyone who touches the dead body of one of these animals will make themself impure **and should not touch any other person or any sacred object or enter into any sacred space** until the evening of the day when he touched the dead animal. **28** Anyone who picks up one of the dead bodies of any of these animals should wash his clothes **to purify themself from the impurity of the animal's dead body**. That person will be impure **and so should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter into any sacred space** until the evening of the day when they touched the animal's dead body. For this reason, the people of Israel should consider these animals to be impure and not acceptable to eat.

29 Out of all the animals that swarm on the ground, these are the ones that the people of Israel should consider to be impure: rats, mice, any kind of large lizard, **30** geckos, spotted lizards, newts, skinks, and chameleons. **31** Remember, out of all the animals that swarm, the people of Israel should consider these types of animals to be impure and unacceptable to eat. Anyone who touches one of them after it has died will make themself impure **so that person should not touch anyone else or any sacred object or enter into any sacred space** until the evening of the day when he touched the animal's dead body. **32** Likewise, it may happen that one of these impure animals or insects falls onto something after it has died. If this happens, that object will become impure. Whether it is wood, cloth, leather, or burlap, if it is something that the people of Israel use for domestic purposes, whoever owns the object should soak it in water. The people of Israel should consider the object to be impure until the evening of the day on which the animal's dead body fell onto it. After that evening, whoever owns the object should consider it be to clean **and acceptable to use for its intended purpose**. **33** It may happen that one of these impure animals or insects falls into a clay pot. If this happens, the people of Israel should consider everything in the pot to be impure. Whoever owns the pot should shatter it. **34** It may also happen that the water from a clay pot into which an impure animal or insect has fallen happens to come into contact with anything edible. If this happens, that food will also be impure **and no one should eat it**. This is because once an impure animal or insect comes

into contact with any drinkable liquid that is in a pot, that liquid also becomes impure. **35** Any object onto which the dead body of any of these impure animals or insects falls will also become impure. Whether the dead body falls onto an oven or a small stove, whoever owns the object should smash it to pieces. The people of Israel should consider that object to be impure and unacceptable for its original intended purpose. It will not cease to be impure but will remain impure. **36** However, **it may happen that the dead body of one of these impure animals or insects falls into** a spring or any large system for collecting and storing water. If this happens, the water that comes out of it is still pure. **The people of Israel may drink it**. Nonetheless, anyone who touches one of those dead bodies will still become impure. **37** Likewise, it may happen that the dead body of one of these impure animals or insects happens to fall onto any plantable seeds that someone was going to plant. If this happens, those seeds are still pure. **Whoever owns them may still plant them.** **38** Alternatively, it may happen that the dead body of one of these impure animals or insects falls on those seeds after whoever planted the seeds has watered them. If this happens, then the people of Israel could consider those seeds to be impure and unacceptable.

39 It may happen that an animal that the people of Israel may eat dies and someone touches it. If this happens, whoever has touched it has made himself impure **so that he should not touch another person or any sacred object or enter into any sacred space** until the evening of the day when he touched the animal's dead body. **40** Furthermore, anyone who eats any meat from the animal's dead body should wash his clothes **to purify them**. He has made himself impure until the evening of the day when he ate the animal's meat. Likewise, anyone who carries the animal's dead body should wash his clothes **to purify them**. He has made himself impure until the evening of the day when he carried the animal's dead body.

41 The Israelite people should consider any animals or insects that swarm on the ground to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat. No Israelite should ever eat these animals. **42** This means that no Israelite should ever eat any animal that crawls on its belly and also has four legs or any animal that has many legs, like a swarming ground-dwelling insect. This is because the Israelite people should consider these animals and insects to be disgusting and completely unacceptable to eat. **43** The Israelite people should never make themselves disgusting by eating or touching any of these swarming insects or animals. Neither should they make themselves impure or defile themselves by touching or eating them. **44** Remember who I am: I am Yahweh your God, and I am holy. The people of Israel must likewise be holy people

because I am holy. Do not cause yourselves to become impure by eating or touching swarming animals or insects that crawl along the ground. **45** Remember that I, Yahweh, freed the Israelite people when they were slaves in Egypt. I did this so that I could be their God. Therefore, because I am holy, they should be holy people.

46 These are the instructions for how the people of Israel should handle domestic animals, birds, any swarming fish that live in water, or any swarming insects or animals that live on dry land. **47** The people of Israel should learn to distinguish what is unacceptable to me and impure from that which is acceptable to me and pure. This means that they should also learn to distinguish those living creatures that are acceptable to eat from those that are unacceptable to eat."

12 **1** Then Yahweh told Moses **2** "Tell the people of Israel that when a woman is pregnant and gives birth to a boy, she has become impure for seven days. This is just like when she becomes impure from her regular menstruation; she has become impure. **3** She should make sure that the priests circumcise her baby boy eight days after he is born. **4** Then the woman should wait about a month in the impurity of the blood she bled from giving birth. During this time, she should not touch sacred objects or enter into holy space, like the sacred tent, until that time is over. **5** But if a woman gives birth to a baby girl, she has become impure for two weeks. This is just like when she is menstruating each month. The woman should wait about two months in the impurity of the blood she bled when she gave birth to the baby.

6 After the time in which she is waiting to purify herself is over, that woman should bring a one-year-old lamb to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent. She should do this whether she gives birth to a baby boy or a baby girl. The priest should offer the lamb as a wholly burned sacrifice. The woman should also bring a dove or a pigeon to the priest. He should offer it as a purifying sacrifice. **This will purify her and allow her to be pure again before me.** **7** The priest should offer these animals in my presence in the sacred tent. When this happens, I will accept her again and purify her from the impurity of the blood that she bled when she gave birth to the baby.

This is the way that women who give birth, whether to a baby boy or girl, should offer sacrifices to purify themselves from the impurity of the blood that they bleed when they give birth to their children. **8** However, if any woman cannot afford a lamb, then she may bring two

pigeons or two doves. The priest should offer one of the birds as a wholly burned sacrifice and the other as a purifying sacrifice. When the priest offers these birds, I will accept the woman again, and I will purify her from the impurity of the blood that she bled when she gave birth to her children."

13 **1** Then Yahweh told Aaron and Moses, **2** "It may happen that someone finds a raised area, a protective crust, or a discolored spot on their skin. If their skin looks infected, like it may be an infectious skin disease, then someone should bring the infected person to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons or descendants, who are also priests. **3** The priest should examine the person's infected skin. The priest should look to see if the hair on the infection is white and if the infection itself appears to be under their skin. If it is, then that infection is a symptom of an infectious skin disease. When the priest sees this kind of infection, he should judge the infected person to be impure. **The impure person should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter sacred space.** **4** However, the priest might see that the discolored spot on the person's skin is white. He may also see that the infection is only skin-deep, and the hair on the infected spot is not white. If the priest sees this kind of infection, then he should quarantine the person with the infection for one week. **5** On the last day of that week, the priest should examine the infected person again. Indeed, if the priest can see that the infection is still there, but it has not spread on the person's skin, then the priest should quarantine the infected person for another week. **6** On the last day of that second week, the priest should examine the infected person again. This time, he should look to see if the infection has spread on the skin. If it has not, but rather the infection has receded and is now fainter in color, then the priest should judge the infected person to be pure. **That person may now touch other people and sacred objects and enter sacred space.** The infection is just a benign scab. The person with the infection should wash and clean his clothes, and then he will be pure. **7** However, it may happen that the scab spreads aggressively on the skin after the priest has examined the infected person and judged them to be pure. If this happens, then the person with the infection must go and show himself to the priest again. **8** The priest should then examine the person with the infection. The priest should determine that the scab has really spread on the infected person's skin. If it has, then the priest should judge that person to be impure. The person has become impure because the scab is actually a symptom of an infectious skin disease.

9 It may also happen that someone develops an infection because of an infectious skin disease. In this case, the person with the infection should go to the priest. 10 When the priest examines him, the priest should look to see if there is a white swelling on the skin that has caused the hair on the infected spot to become white. If the priest also sees that the skin on the swelling is raw, 11 then this infection on the person's skin is actually a symptom of a chronic, infectious skin disease. The priest should judge the person to be impure. **The impure person should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter into sacred space.** In this case, because the person with the infection is impure, the priest should not merely quarantine the person temporarily.

12 Alternatively, **when the priest examines the person with the infection, he might see that** the infectious skin disease has broken out aggressively on the person's skin such that, as far as the priest can see, it now covers the infected person's entire body, from head to toe. 13 If this happens, then the priest should look to see whether the infectious skin disease has really covered the infected person's entire body. If this happens, **and the infected skin has turned white,** the priest should judge the person with the infection to be pure. Because the infection has turned entirely white, the person is pure, **and the infection is not a symptom of an infectious skin disease.** 14 However, whenever a person sees that there is raw skin on their infection, that person has become impure. **The impure person should not touch other people or sacred objects or enter into sacred space.** 15 Whenever the priest sees raw skin on an infection, he should judge the person to be impure. **The person is impure because** there is raw skin on their infection. This demonstrates that the infection is actually a symptom of an infectious disease. 16 But it may happen that the raw skin of the person with the infection changes and once again becomes white. If this happens, he should go to the priest. 17 The priest should examine him. This time, the priest should look to see if the infection has really become white. If it has, then the priest should judge the person with the infection to be pure. **Because the infection is white,** he is now pure. **The infection is not a symptom of an infectious disease.**

18 It may also happen that someone has a boil on their skin, but the boil eventually healed. 19 It may be that, where the boil used to be, there is now a white swelling or a discolored spot on the skin that is reddish in color. If there is, then that person must go and show himself to the priest. 20 The priest should examine the person's skin. The priest should look to see if the discolored or swollen spot of skin seems to be under the skin or if the hair on that spot has

become white. These things are symptoms of an infectious skin disease that has broken out where the boil used to be. Therefore, the priest should judge the person to be impure.
21 Alternatively, the priest might examine the person's skin and see that there is no white hair on the discolored or swollen spot of skin. If, instead, the spot is only skin-deep, and it has receded and is now fainter in color, then the priest should quarantine the person with the infection for one week. **22** If, after a week, the swollen or discolored spot of skin has spread aggressively on the skin, then the priest should judge the person to be impure. That spot of skin is actually an infection. **23** But if that discolored spot of skin has stayed where it was and has not spread, then it is merely a scar from the boil. The priest should judge the person to be pure again. **The pure person can touch other people and sacred objects and enter into sacred space once again.**

24 It might also happen that a person has a burn from a fire on his skin. The raw skin from the burn may be discolored and reddish-white or pure white in color. **25** If this happens, then the priest should examine the person who has the burn. The priest should look to see if the hair on the discolored spot of skin has become white or if the discolored spot seems to be under the skin. If the priest sees these things, then the discolored spot of skin is a symptom of an infectious skin disease that has broken out on the burn. Because the discolored skin from the burn is an infection and a symptom of an infectious skin disease, the priest should declare the person with the burn to be impure. **26** Alternatively, the priest might examine the person's skin and see that there is no white hair on the discolored spot of skin, that the discolored spot is only skin-deep, and that the spot has receded and is now fainter in color. If the priest sees this, then he should quarantine the person with the burn for one week. **27** On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should examine the person with the burn again. If the discolored spot of skin has spread aggressively on the skin, then the priest should judge the person to be impure. The discolored spot is actually an infection and a symptom of an infectious skin disease. **28** However, the priest might see that the discolored spot of skin has stayed where it was and has not spread on the skin but, instead, it has receded and is now fainter in color. If the priest sees this, then the discolored spot of skin is only swelling from the burn. Because the discolored spot of skin is actually just a scar from the burn, the priest should judge the person with the burn to be pure again.

29 It may also happen that a man or a woman has an infection in any place where hair might grow, either on the head or on the lower portion of the face. **30** If this happens, the priest

should examine the person with the infection. The priest should look to see if the infection is under the skin or if the hair on the infection has become bright yellow in color and has thinned out. If the priest sees these things, then he should judge the person to be impure. The infection is actually an itchy and contagious skin infection that has come from an infectious skin disease on the head or on the lower portion of the face. **31** However, when the priest examines the person with the infection that appears to be an itchy, contagious skin infection, he might see that the infection does not seem to be under the skin and that there is no normal hair on the infection. If the priest sees these things, then he should quarantine the person with the infection for one week. **32** On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should examine the person with the infection again. The priest should look to see if the spot that looks like it might be an itchy, contagious skin infection has spread. If the hair on the infection is not bright red in color and the spot does not appear to be under the skin, **33** the person with the infection should shave all of his or her hair. However, that person should not shave the hair that is near the spot that looks like it might be an itchy, contagious skin infection. Then the priest should quarantine the person for another week. **34** On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should again examine the person who has the infection that looks like it might be an itchy, contagious skin infection. If the infection has not spread on the skin, and it appears to only be skin-deep, then the priest should judge the person to be pure. The person should wash his clothes, and then he will be pure once again. **35** However, it may happen that the spot that looked like it might have been an itchy, contagious skin infection later aggressively spreads on the person's skin after the priest judged the person to be pure. **36** If this happens, then the priest should examine him again. The priest should look to see if the spot has spread on the skin. If it has, then the priest need not look for hair that is bright red in color. The person that has the infection that has spread has become impure. **37** However, if, as far as the priest can see, the spot is unchanged and the hair growing on the infected area is healthy, then the infection has healed. **Because it has healed and is not a symptom of an infectious skin disease,** the person is now pure again. So the priest should judge the person to be pure.

38 It may also happen that a man or a woman finds very white spots on their skin. **39** The priest should examine that person. Indeed, if the priest sees that the shiny spots on their skin are a faded white in color. Then it is a benign rash that has broken out on the skin. **The discolored skin is not a symptom of an infectious skin disease.** The person is still pure.

40 It may happen to some men that the hair on the crown of his head starts to thin. If this happens, he is simply balding. He is still pure. **41** The same is true if the hair at the front of his head starts to thin. He is simply developing a receding hairline. He is still pure. **42** However, it may happen that such a man discovers an infection that is reddish-white in color on his balding head, whether his crown is balding or he is developing a receding hairline. If this happens, then the infection is a symptom of an infectious skin disease that has broken out on his balding head, no matter the way in which he is balding. **43** The priest should examine the balding man who has the infection. The priest should look to see if the swollen infection on his balding head —no matter the way in which he is balding—is reddish-white in color, like the way that an infectious skin disease looks on a person's skin. **44** If the man's infection looks like this, then he has an infectious skin disease and he is impure. Because the infection on his head has the appearance that it does, the priest surely must judge the man to be impure.

45 Anyone who has an infectious skin disease that develops an infection should tear his clothes and let his long hair hang down disheveled. He should also show his shame by covering his upper lip and crying out, 'I am impure! I have a contagious skin disease! Do not come near me!' **46** As long as he has the infection, he is impure. Because he is impure, he should live alone in a residence outside of the area where everyone else lives.

47 Likewise, it might happen that a piece of clothing has on it an infection that is a symptom of an infectious disease. The infection might be on a piece of woolen or linen clothing **48** or on any linen or woolen material that someone is weaving together. Alternatively, the infection might be on a scrap piece of leather or on something that is made of leather. **49** If the infection on any of these fabrics is greenish or reddish in color, then the infection is a symptom of an infectious disease. Whoever owns the infected piece of clothing must show it to a priest. **50** The priest should examine the infected piece of fabric. If it is indeed infected, then he should quarantine it for one week. **51** On the last day of the week-long quarantine, the priest should examine the infected fabric again. Whenever the infected spot spreads, the infection is actually a symptom of an infectious, malignant disease. This is true whether the fabric is part of a piece of clothing, two threads that the person is weaving together, or a scrap piece of leather (no matter what the person is making from the leather). The piece of fabric is now impure. **52** Whoever owns the impure item that has the infection on it should burn the item, no

matter what fabric or material it is. Because the infection is a symptom of an infectious malignant disease, he must burn it completely.

53 Alternatively, the priest might examine the infected fabric, and he might see that the infected spot has not spread on it—whether it is a piece of clothing, two threads that someone was weaving together, or anything that someone made from leather. **54** If the priest sees that the fabric is indeed infected, then he should tell whoever owns it to wash the thing that has the infection on it and put the entire item in a separate place for another week. **55** The priest should examine the item a week after the owner has washed the infected fabric. Indeed, if the infection remains unchanged in color, even if it has not spread, the fabric is impure and should not be used. Because the infection is actually a rotting fungus, whether on the back or front side of the item, the owner should completely burn the entire item. **56** However, when the priest examines the infected fabric after the owner has washed it, indeed, he may see that the infection has receded and is now fainter in color. If this has happened, the owner should tear the infected portion of fabric out from the item, whether it is an article of clothing or of leather or of weaving. **57** The infection may reappear on the fabric, regardless of what type of item is infected. If this happens, the rotting fungus is spreading. This time, the owner of the infected fabric must completely burn the entire item. **58** However, if, after the owner washes the item, the infection disappears, the owner should wash it a second time, and then it will be pure.

59 This is the way that the people of Israel should handle infections that come from infectious diseases that appear on woolen or linen clothing or on a woven article or on a piece of leather. The people of Israel should use these instructions to determine whether something is pure or impure."

14 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2** "This is what an Israelite should do to be judged pure when he or she has had an infectious skin disease. The individual should first go to the priest. **3** The priest should meet the person with the infectious skin disease at a location outside the camp and there the priest should examine him. The priest should look to see if the infection is fully healed and no longer contagious. **4** If it is, then the priest should tell the person who desires to be clean to bring two living birds that are acceptable to eat, some cedar wood, crimson thread, and some hyssop branches. **5** Next, the priest should tell the infected person to kill one of the birds while he suspends it over a clay pot that contains fresh water. **6** Then the

priest should grab the bird that is still living, along with the cedar, the crimson thread, and the hyssop branches. The priest should dip all of these items, including the living bird, into the water that now also contains blood from the bird that the person killed. **7** The priest should then flick some of the water and blood on the previously infected person whom the priest now intends to cleanse. The priest must flick the blood and water on him seven times. Then the priest should declare that the person is pure **and that he may be with other people again.** Finally, the priest should release the living bird and allow it to fly away toward the open field.

8 Then the person whom the priest judged to be pure should go and wash his clothes, shave off all of his hair, and bathe himself thoroughly. When he has done these things, the people of Israel should know that he is pure; he may return to the camp, but he should remain outside his tent for a full week. **9** On the last day of that week-long period, that person should shave off all his hair once again, including his head, beard, and eyebrows. He should wash his clothes once again and thoroughly bathe himself. After he does these things, the people of Israel should consider him to be completely pure. **He may be with other people again.**

10 The very next day, that person should acquire two totally healthy male lambs and a totally healthy, year-old female lamb. He should also acquire about seven liters of wheat flour and mix it with olive oil in order to present it as a grain offering. Finally, he should acquire about a half of a liter of olive oil. **11** The priest who judged the person to be pure should make the person whom he is cleansing, along with all of the required items and animals, stand in my presence at the entrance of the sacred tent.

12 Then the priest should take one of the male lambs and present it to me to show that he will offer it as a restoring sacrifice. He should also do this with the olive oil. Then priest should lift the lamb and show off the olive oil in my presence in order to demonstrate that he will offer them as a presentation sacrifice. **13** Then that person should kill the lamb in the same location in which people regularly kill the purifying and wholly burned sacrifices. This location should be somewhere that the priests have set apart for such sacred purposes. The person should kill the lamb here because the restoring sacrifice is like the purifying sacrifice in this regard: it belongs to the priest for his portion of food. Out of all the gifts that people offer to me, the portion of the sacrifice that the priests keep for themselves for food is specially set apart.
14 **After catching some of the lamb's blood in a bowl,** the priest should take the blood of the restoring sacrifice and place some of it on the person whom the priest is cleansing—on the

lobe of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. **15** Then the priest should take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. **16** The priest should then dip his right forefinger into the oil on his left palm and flick that oil seven times with his forefinger toward my presence in the Holy Place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **17** Whatever oil is left on the priest's palm he should smear on the lobe of the right ear of the person whom the priest is cleansing, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. The priest should put the oil on top of the blood of the purifying sacrifice that he previously put on the person's extremities. **18** The priest should place whatever oil remains on his palm onto the head of the person whom he is cleansing. When the priest has done this, he will have cleansed the person in my presence in the sacred tent. **I will restore the person and remove the impurity he acquired from his infectious skin disease.**

19 Then the priest should prepare the purifying sacrifice so that he might make a sacrifice that I will accept on behalf of the person whom the priest judged to be clean. If he does this, I will fully cleanse the individual from the impurity that he acquired from his infection. After the priest has offered the purifying sacrifice, the individual whom the priest is cleansing should kill the other lamb so that the priest can begin to prepare the wholly burned sacrifice. **20** The priest should make the wholly burned sacrifice and the grain offering go up to me in heaven by burning them on the altar in a way that causes smoke to go up. If he does this, the priest will have offered a sacrifice that I will accept on behalf of the individual whom the priest is cleansing. I will remove the impurity of his infection from him so that he will be pure once again.

21 However, if the person whom the priest is cleansing is poor and cannot afford the two lambs, then he should acquire one lamb for the priest to offer as a restoring sacrifice by lifting it high to me. The individual should offer this lamb so that I might accept him and remove the impurity of his infection from him. In addition to the lamb, the individual should also acquire about two liters of wheat flour that he has mixed with olive oil and can offer as a grain offering. He should also acquire an additional half of a liter of olive oil. **22** He should also acquire two doves or two pigeons—whichever he can afford. He should offer one of these birds as a purifying sacrifice and the other as a wholly burned sacrifice.

23 Seven days after the priest judged him to be pure, the individual should bring the animals, the flour, and olive oil to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent, where he may

offer them in my presence. He should bring them all so that I may fully cleanse him from the impurity of his infection. **24** Then the priest should take the lamb that the individual is offering as a restoring sacrifice. He should also take the olive oil. He should raise them up to show me that these are sacrifices that the individual will offer in my presence. **25** Then the individual should kill the lamb that he is offering as a purifying sacrifice **and catch some of its blood in a bowl.** The priest should take some of the lamb's blood and place it on the lobe of the right ear of the person whom the priest is cleansing, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. **26** Then the priest should take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. **27** The priest **should then dip his right forefinger into the oil on his left palm and** flick that oil seven times toward my presence in the Holy Place where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. **28** Whatever oil is left on the priest's palm he should put on the lobe of the right ear of the person whom the priest is cleansing, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot. The priest should put the oil on top of the blood of the restoring sacrifice that he previously put on the person's extremities. **29** The priest should pour whatever oil remains on his palm onto the head of the person whom the priest is cleansing. When the priest has done this, I will have cleansed the person in his presence. **I will restore the person and remove the impurity he acquired from his infectious skin disease.** **30** Then the priest should take one of the birds that the person has been able to afford—whichever type, the dove or the pigeon—and prepare it for the sacrifice. **31** **The priest should kill the birds that the person acquired and butcher them in the usual way.** He should offer one as a purifying sacrifice and the other as a wholly burned sacrifice. The priest should do this by placing them on the altar so that he might offer in my presence a sacrifice that I will accept on behalf of the person whom the priest has judged to be clean. I will restore the individual and remove the impurity of his infection from him.

32 This is what the person with an infectious skin disease, and who is also poor and cannot afford the usual offerings, should do so that I can cleanse him from the impurity of his infection."

33 Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, **34** "I am about to give the people of Israel the land of Canaan, which will belong to them permanently. When the people enter that land, it may happen that I cause an infectious mildew to appear in or on one of the people's family homes. **35** Whenever that happens, the owner of the house should go and inform the priest that

there is something in his house that looks like mildew. **36** The priest should tell him to take everything out of the house before the priest comes to examine the mildew. If the owner does not do this, the priest should judge everything and everyone in the house to be impure. However, if the person does what the priest asks, then the priest should enter the house to examine it. **37** The priest should then inspect the house for mildew. Specifically, he should look to see if the mildew has broken out into spots that are greenish or reddish in color on the plaster on the walls. He should also look to see if the mildew appears to be deeper than the surface of the plaster. **38** If the priest sees these things, then he should immediately leave the house through the front door and quarantine the house for a full week. **39** On the last day of that week-long quarantine, the priest should return to the house and inspect it again. He should look to see if the mildew on the plaster of the walls has spread. **40** If it has, then the priest should tell the owner and residents of the house to tear out every stone in the wall that bears the mildew and cast the infected stones wherever people dispose of impure items outside of the city **41** After the owner has removed all the infected stones, he must scrape all around the inside of the house. The owner must dispose of all the plaster that he scrapes off in the same location where people dispose of impure items outside of the city **42** Then the owner of the house should acquire new stones to replace the ones that bear the mildew. He should also acquire new plaster and replaster the stones in the walls of the house.

43 It may happen that the mildew returns and spreads on the walls of the house after the owner of the house has removed the infected stones, scraped the walls clean, and replastered them. **44** If this has happened, then the priest should go to the house and examine it again. He should look to see if the mildew has spread on the plaster of the walls of the house. If it has, then the mildew is actually a malignant mold. The priest should judge the house to be impure **and no one should live in it.** **45** The owner of the house must completely tear it down. He should remove the stones, the timber, and all the plaster. The owner of the house should dispose of everything wherever people dispose of impure items outside of the city.

46 Suppose someone goes into that house during the quarantine. Then the priest must declare that this person will be impure until the evening of the day on which he entered the house. **47** Anyone who sleeps in that house or eats in it during that time must wash and clean his clothes.

48 Alternatively, whenever the priest comes to examine the house after the owner has replastered it, the priest may determine that the mildew has not spread on the walls. If it has not, then, because the cleaning process has stopped the mold, the priest should judge the house to be pure again. **49** For the priest to purify the house, he will need two birds, some cedar wood, crimson thread, and some hyssop branches. **50** The owner of the house should kill one of the birds while suspending it over a clay pot containing fresh water. **51** Then the priest should take the cedar wood, the hyssop branches, the crimson thread, and the bird which is still alive. He should dip them into the mixture of the blood of the bird, which the owner of the house has just killed, and the fresh water. He should flick some of that blood and water onto the house seven times. **52** By doing this with the blood of the bird, the fresh water, the living bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop branches, and the crimson thread, the priest will be able to purify the house. **53** The priest should release the bird that is still alive and allow it to fly away outside the city toward an open field. By doing this, he will have asked me to accept the house and remove from it the impurity that the house acquired from the infectious mold. When I do this, the house will be pure once again.

54 So, those are the instructions for handling any infections that are symptoms of infectious skin diseases, itchy skin irritations, **55** infections in fabric or in a house, **56** and swellings, rashes, or discolored spots on someone's skin. **57** These instructions will teach the priests and the people of Israel how to determine when something or someone is impure and when they are pure. These are the instructions for handling various types of infectious diseases."

15 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, **2** "Tell the people of Israel that any man might have a discharge coming from his genitals. Whenever this happens, the people of Israel should consider this discharge to be impure. **3** Now, this is how the people of Israel should deal with these types of discharges that have the potential to make people impure. It does not matter whether the man's genitals have secreted the discharge or whether there is a blockage in the man's genitals; the people of Israel should consider this man to be impure.

4 The people should consider any bed on which the man who has had a discharge lies to also be impure. Additionally, they should consider any furniture on which the man sits to be impure. **5** Anyone who touches that man's bed should wash and clean his clothes and bathe

thoroughly. That person should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the man's bed. **6** Anyone who sits on any furniture on which the man who has had a discharge has sat should also wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should likewise consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he sat on the impure man's furniture.

7 In the same way, anyone who touches the man who has had a discharge should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. The person should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the impure man.

8 It may happen that the man who has had a discharge spits on someone who is still pure. If this occurs, the person on whom the impure man spat should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. He should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which the impure man spat on him.

9 The people of Israel should also consider any clothing or saddle on which the man who has had a discharge rides to be just as impure. **10** Anyone who touches anything that was under him while he rode should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the impure man's clothing or saddle on which he rode. Likewise, anyone who picks up or carries whatever was under him while he rode should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. He should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he lifted or carried the impure man's means of riding. **11** It may happen that the man who has had a discharge touches someone without first washing his hands. If this happens, the person he touched should wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should also consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which the impure man touched him.

12 It may happen that the man who has had a discharge touches a clay pot. If this happens, whoever owns the pot should shatter it. However, if the man touches a wooden utensil, whoever owns the utensil must rinse it with water.

13 It may happen that a man who has had a discharge recovers and no longer experiences any discharge. If this happens, the man should remain as he is for one full week in order to prepare for the day when I will cleanse him from his impurity. During this time, he should wash his clothes and make sure to bathe and clean his genitals with fresh water. If he does this,

he can consider himself to be pure once again. **14** On the last day of that week, he should acquire two doves or two pigeons and come into my presence at the entrance of the sacred tent. There, the man should give the birds he acquired to the priest. **15** The priest should prepare the birds as sacrifices to me. One of the birds should be a purifying sacrifice and the other should be a wholly burned sacrifice. When the priest offers these sacrifices in my presence, I will accept them and restore the man. I will remove from the man the impurity he acquired from his impure discharge.

16 It may also happen that a man experiences a seminal emission. When this happens, the man should bathe his whole body, including his genitals, thoroughly. The man should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he experienced the emission. **17** The man who had the emission should thoroughly wash any clothing or leather that came into contact with the semen. He should consider that piece of clothing or leather to be impure until the evening of the day on which they came into contact with the semen. **18** It may happen that a man has sexual relations with a woman and experiences a seminal emission. When this happens, both the man and the woman should bathe themselves thoroughly. They should consider themselves to be impure until the evening of the day on which they had sexual relations.

19 Similarly, it may happen that a woman experiences her menstrual period, such that blood discharges from her genitals. When this happens, she should remain as she is for a full week. During this period, whoever touches the menstruating woman should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched her. **20** The people of Israel should consider any furniture on which the menstruating woman lies or sits to be impure. **21** Anyone who touches a menstruating woman's bed should wash and clean his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the menstruating woman's bed. **22** Anyone who touches any furniture on which a menstruating woman has sat should also wash his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should likewise consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the menstruating woman's bed or her furniture. **23** It may happen that there was something on the menstruating woman's bed or on a piece of furniture on which the menstruating woman sat. When someone touches that object, he should consider himself to be unclean until the evening of the day on which he touched that object.

24 It may occasionally happen that a man has sexual relations with a menstruating woman such that he comes into contact with her menstrual blood. If this happens, he should consider himself to be impure for a full week. The people of Israel should consider any bed on which that man lies to be impure as well.

25 It may also happen that a woman experiences an extended discharge of blood when she is not normally menstruating, or her discharge continues for an inordinate amount of time. If this happens, as long as she experiences a discharge of blood, she should consider herself to be impure, just as when she experiences her normal menstruation. **26** As long as the woman experiences this type of unusual bloody discharge, the people of Israel should consider any bed on which she lies or any furniture on which she sits to be impure, just as is the case when women normally menstruate and become temporarily impure. **27** Anyone who touches the woman's bed or furniture should consider himself to be unclean. He should wash and clean his clothes and bathe thoroughly. That person should consider himself to be impure until the evening of the day on which he touched the woman's bed or furniture.

28 It may happen that a woman who has experienced an unusual bloody discharge recovers and no longer experiences any discharge. If this happens, the woman should remain as she is for one full week in order to prepare for the day when I will cleanse her from her impurity. After this time, she should consider herself to be pure once again. **29** On the last day of that week, the woman should acquire two doves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent. **30** The priest should prepare the birds as sacrifices to me. One of the birds should be a purifying sacrifice and the other should be a wholly burned sacrifice. When the priest offers these sacrifices in my presence, I will accept them and restore the woman. I will remove from her the impurity she acquired from her impure bloody discharge.

31 The people of Israel must follow these instructions in order to distinguish themselves from that which is impure among them. If they are able to do this, they will not desecrate the sacred place in which I live among them and so I will not kill them. **But if they continue to make themselves impure, I will kill them when they desecrate the sacred place in which I live among them.**

32 So, this is what the people of Israel should do when someone experiences a discharge—whenever a man has a seminal emission and so becomes impure, **33** whenever any woman

menstruates, whenever anyone, whether a man or a woman, has a bodily discharge, or whenever a man has sexual relations with a woman during her menstrual period."

16 **1** After Aaron's two sons died when they approached Yahweh, Yahweh spoke to Moses. **2** Yahweh said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron not to enter into the Most Holy Place inside the curtain where the Sacred Chest and its Lid are located, because I am present in that place in a cloud that hovers over the Lid of the Sacred Chest. If Aaron goes into that room at any time I have not commanded him to go in, he will die.

3 But when it is time for Aaron to enter the Most Holy Place in the sacred tent, this is how he should do it. He should acquire a bull from the people's livestock and a ram. He should select the bull to offer as a purifying sacrifice and the ram as a wholly burned sacrifice. **4** Aaron should first wash himself thoroughly and then put on the sacred articles of clothing. He should make sure that the linen undergarments are on his bare skin. Aaron should then put on the sacred linen embroidered tunic, and he should tie the linen waistband around himself. Likewise, he should wrap the linen turban around his head. These are Aaron's sacred articles of clothing that he is to wear. **5** Then Aaron should acquire two male goats and a ram from the flocks of the Israelite community. He should select the goats to offer as purifying sacrifices and the ram as a wholly burned sacrifice.

6 Then Aaron should present the bull as a purifying sacrifice for his own sake. When he does this, I will remove Aaron's sins and the sins of his family from them. **7** Then Aaron should bring the two goats, and he should make them stand in my presence in the entrance of the sacred tent. **8** Aaron should then roll a pair of small stones on the ground to determine which goat the priests should sacrifice to Yahweh and which goat the priests should send off into the wilderness. **9** Then he should offer the goat that the stones designated belonged to me, to Yahweh. He should prepare it as a purifying sacrifice. **10** As for the goat that the stones determined that the priests should send off into the wilderness, Aaron should make it stand in my presence alive so that I can use the goat to remove the people's sins from them by sending the goat off into the desert wilderness.

11 Aaron should then present the bull that he selected for himself to be a purifying sacrifice. By presenting it, Aaron will ensure that I will remove his sins and the sins of his

family from them. Once he has presented it to me, Aaron should kill the bull **and drain off some of its blood in a bowl.** **12** Then he should take a tray and fill it with burning coals from the altar outside the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. He should also grab two handfuls of sweet-smelling, finely ground incense and bring both the incense and the burning coals inside the sacred curtain. **13** Then Aaron should place the incense over the burning coals in Yahweh's presence. As it burns, the incense will produce a smoke cloud that will obscure the Lid that sits on the Sacred Chest. The cloud of incense will ensure that Aaron will not see my presence in that place so that he will not die. **14** Aaron should also take the bull's blood and, with his finger, he should flick the blood onto the front of the Lid of the Sacred Chest (on the eastern side) seven times.

15 **Aaron should then leave the sacred tent.** He should kill the goat that he selected to offer as a purifying sacrifice **and drain off some of its blood into a bowl**. He should offer the goat as a sacrifice on the people's behalf. Aaron should then bring the goat's blood inside the sacred curtain and do with the goat's blood exactly what he did with the blood of the bull. He should flick the goat's blood onto the front side of the Lid of the Sacred Chest **seven times**. **16** By doing this, I will purify the Most Holy Place from anything that the people of Israel have done to cause it to become impure and defiled. I will also purify it from any wrongdoing that the people of Israel may have done, even if they have openly defied what I have told my people to do. Regardless, Aaron should do these things so that Yahweh can purify his sacred tent that is located in the midst of the people of Israel who are often impure and do wrong. **17** No one else may enter the sacred tent the whole time Aaron is inside the sacred tent doing these things in the Most Holy Place so that I will remove the people's sins from them. I will remove Aaron's sins, the sins of his family, and the sins of the entire Israelite community from them.

18 Aaron should then go out of the Most Holy Place to the altar that is in the sacred precincts of the sacred tent where I, Yahweh, live among the Israelites. To purify the altar, he should take some of the blood of both the bull and the goat and daub it onto the four projected corners on every side of the altar. **19** Aaron should also flick some of the animal's blood onto the altar seven times with his finger. By doing this, he will cleanse the altar from anything that the people of Israel have done to make it impure, and he will set it apart for my purposes alone.

20 When Aaron has finished purifying the Most Holy Place, the sacred tent, and the altar, he should present the goat that is still alive. **21** Aaron should place both of his hands on the

head of the living goat. He should then say loudly all the ways the people of Israel have done wrong intentionally, all the ways they have openly defied what I have told my people to do, and any other ways that they have done wrong. By this, Aaron will place the guilt for these actions onto the goat's head. Then Aaron should send the goat off into the desert wilderness by handing it off to a person who is standing by ready to lead the goat away. **22** The goat will carry all of the guilt for the ways the people of Israel have done wrong into a place in the wilderness that no one will be able to access. He must send it away to the wilderness!

23 Then Aaron should go back into the sacred tent and remove the sacred linen clothing that he was wearing when he first entered the Most Holy Place. He should leave all those articles of special clothing in the sacred tent. **24** Aaron should then bathe himself thoroughly in a place that the priests have set apart for such sacred purposes. He should then put on his everyday clothes and go out of the sacred tent. Then Aaron should prepare the animals that he has selected to offer as wholly burned offerings for himself and for the people. When Aaron offers these animals, I will remove Aaron's sins and the sins of all the people from them. **25** To do this, Aaron should burn the fat portions of the purifying sacrifice on the altar in such a way that it causes smoke to go up.

26 The person who leads the goat away into the wilderness where the goat demon Azazel lives should return, wash his clothes, and bathe himself thoroughly. After he has done this, he may enter the camp again. **27** But, because Aaron brought their blood into the Most Holy Place so that I might remove the peoples' sins from them, someone else must remove the remains of the bull that Aaron selected to offer as a purifying sacrifice and of the male goat that he selected to offer as a wholly burned sacrifice and take them outside of the camp. There, he should burn them completely—their skin and all their other meat, including the meat on the animals' heads, their legs below the knee, their other internal organs, and any excrement. **28** The person who burns the remains of the animals should wash his clothes and bathe his body thoroughly. After he has done this, he may enter the camp again.

29 This should be a permanent and enduring practice for the people of Israel: on the tenth day of the seventh month of the year, the people of Israel must participate in activities that practice submitting themselves to me. Neither the native-born Israelite nor the immigrant living among them should do any work. **30** This is because, on this day, I will remove the sins of the people from them in order to cleanse them from all the ways that they do wrong and the

people will be pure in my presence. **31** The people of Israel should consider this day to be the most important Sabbath day. They must participate in activities that practice submitting themselves to me. The people should always remember to observe this practice. **32** Only the priest whom I appoint and give the responsibilities of the priesthood to succeed his father as the high priest should offer the sacrifices that I will accept so that I will remove the people's sins from them. That priest should make sure to wear the sacred linen clothing when he performs this practice. **33** By doing all these practices, the priest will ensure that I will purify the Most Holy Place, the sacred tent, and the altar. He will also ensure that I will remove from them the sins of the entire priesthood and the entire community of Israel. **34** This should be a permanent and enduring practice for the people of Israel. Doing these things will ensure that I will remove from them all of their wrongdoings every year at this time."

Moses did exactly as Yahweh told him to do.

17 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2** "Speak to Aaron, his living sons, and all the people of Israel. Tell them that I, Yahweh, am giving them the following instructions: **3** 'This is forbidden: No Israelite should ever kill an ox, a lamb, or a goat either inside or outside of the camp where the Israelites live. **4** This is because when they do this, they have not brought their animals into my presence in the sacred tent. They should offer their animals to me, to Yahweh, in the place where I live among the Israelites. But because they kill the animals somewhere else, they have shed innocent blood. I, Yahweh, will demand that blood from them. I will make the person who does this an outcast and remove him from my people. **5** The people of Israel should do this so that they will no longer offer any sacrifices in the open fields. Instead, they must offer those sacrifices to me by bringing them to the priest who is at the entrance to the sacred tent. There they can offer their animals as fellowship offerings to me, to Yahweh. **6** **After the priest kills whatever animal the people of Israel bring,** he should splatter some of its blood against the altar that belongs to me alone, the one that is located at the entrance to the sacred tent. There the priest should burn the animal's fat in a way that causes smoke to go up, and I will enjoy the smell of the smoke. **7** Let me be clear: The people of Israel have been unfaithful to me by sacrificing to goat demons that they consider to be gods. They should never again sacrifice animals to these demons and supposed gods. These instructions are permanent and enduring; the people of Israel and all their descendants should always observe them.

8 You should also tell Aaron and his sons that this is also forbidden: no native-born Israelite or immigrant who lives among the Israelites should offer wholly burned offerings or any sacrifices **9** without first bringing his animal into my presence in the sacred tent to offer it to me. I, Yahweh, will make the person who does this an outcast from my people.

10 I will oppose any person, whether a native-born Israelite or an immigrant who lives among the Israelites, who consumes any blood. I will make the person who does this an outcast and remove him from my people. **11** For the life of every living thing resides in its blood. I myself have specially provided this blood for my people so that I can remove their sins from them when the blood touches the altar. It is through the blood that I am able to accomplish this, because of the life of the animal that is in its blood. **12** It is for this reason that I have told the people of Israel that nobody, including the immigrant who lives with the people of Israel, may ever consume blood.

13 Now it may be that a native-born Israelite or an immigrant who is living with the people of Israel goes hunting and kills wild game or a bird. Provided that whatever they kill is pure and acceptable for eating, whoever killed it should first drain out its blood. Then he should make sure to cover the blood with dirt. **14** The life of every living thing resides in its blood. Its blood is its life! That is why I have told the people of Israel that nobody may consume the blood of any living thing. Let me be clear: the life of every living thing resides in its blood. I will make whoever consumes blood an outcast and remove him from my people.

15 Anyone in Israel, including foreigners, who eats any of the meat of any creature that is found dead, or that had been killed by wild animals, must wash his clothes and bathe. Then he **must not touch anyone** until that evening because he is impure until then. **16** But if the person does not wash his clothes or bathe himself, he is now responsible for addressing his wrongdoing.'"

18 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2** "Make sure to speak to the people of Israel and remind them that I am Yahweh their God. **3** The people of Israel must not behave like the Egyptians, in whose land they used to live. Neither should they behave like the Canaanites, whose land I am giving to them. The people of Israel should not live in a way that emulates any of the practices that these people do. **4** Instead, the people of Israel should obey my laws

and be very careful to do everything that I tell them. They should live this way, because I am Yahweh their God. **5** The people of Israel should live in such a way that they make a habit of obeying my laws and doing everything that I tell them. When people do this, they truly live. This is because I am Yahweh.

6 So, remember: no Israelite should approach any of his close relatives to have sexual relations with them and so shame them. I am Yahweh!

7 No one should have sexual relations with his mother and so shame her. She is his mother! He should absolutely not shame her or his father in this way.

8 Likewise, no one should have sexual relations with any of his father's other wives and so shame them. **Not only would this shame them,** it would also shame his father.

9 No one should have sexual relations with his sister and shame her, whether she is his father's or his mother's daughter or whether she was born in the same household or somewhere else.

10 No one should have sexual relations with his own grandchildren and shame them. In doing so, the person who does this would absolutely shame himself.

11 No one should have sexual relations with his half-sister and shame her. She is his sister!

12 No one should have sexual relations with his father's sister and shame her. She is his father's close relative!

13 Neither should anyone have sexual relations with his mother's sister and shame her. She is his mother's close relative!

14 No one should have sexual relations with his aunt and so shame her and your uncle. No one should approach his aunt to have sexual relations with her. She is his aunt!

15 No one should have sexual relations with his daughter-in-law and so shame her. She is his son's wife! He should absolutely not shame her in this way.

16 No one should have sexual relations with his sister-in-law and so shame her. The person who does this would shame both her and his brother.

17 No one should have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. This also means that no one should attempt to marry a woman and her granddaughter so that he can have sexual relations with her. They are her close relatives! These kinds of behaviors are utterly depraved—they transgress the way Yahweh intended for family members to relate to one another and only brings shame to everyone involved.

18 No one should attempt to marry his wife's sister so that he can have sexual relations with her while his wife is still living. To do so would only make his sister-in-law a concubine and rival wife.

19 No one should approach a woman who is menstruating and so is impure in order to have sexual relations with her.

20 No man should have sexual relations and have a seminal emission with a fellow Israelite's wife. If he does this, he will become impure.

21 No one should sacrifice their children to the god Molech by burning them alive. Doing so would profane and dishonor my reputation as your God. Remember: I am Yahweh!

22 No man should have sexual relations with another man as he would have with a woman. This behavior is utterly abominable; it transgresses the way Yahweh intended for people to behave and only brings shame to everyone involved.

23 Likewise, no one should have sexual relations with any animal. This means that no woman should give herself to an animal to copulate with it. Doing so would make the person who does this impure. This behavior is utterly perverse—it transgresses the way Yahweh intended for people to behave and only brings shame to everyone involved.

24 The people of Israel must not make themselves impure by doing any of these things, because by doing these things, the people who currently live in the land of Canaan have made themselves impure. I am removing them from the land so that you can live there. **25** In fact, the people who currently live in the land of Canaan have even made the land itself impure. Because of this, I have brought against the land the punishment for the guilt that the land has acquired because of their wrongdoing. I am removing the people who did these things in the land as if the ground itself is throwing them up and rejecting them. **26** But my people, both the

native-born Israelite and the immigrant who is living with the people of Israel, must all be careful to do everything that I have told them, including my laws and my customs. They should never do all of these abominable behaviors that the people who live in the land practice, **27** because the people who currently live in the land of Canaan have done all of these abominable behaviors. As a consequence, they have made the land itself impure. **28** Just as I am removing the people who currently live in the land as if the land itself is throwing them up and rejecting them, if the people of Israel do the same thing, I will also remove them in the same manner.

29 I will remove the people of Israel because I will make any person who does any of these abominable practices an outcast. I, Yahweh, will remove him from my people. **30** So, the people of Israel should be very careful to do everything that I have told them. If they are careful, they will not do the abominable practices that the people who currently live in the land do. The people of Israel will avoid making themselves impure. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!"

19 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2** "Make sure to tell the entire people of Israel that they must be set apart, because I, Yahweh their God, am set apart from wrongdoing and impurity of the world. **I want my people to be like me.**

3 Everyone should show respect to their parents. Likewise, everyone should practice the Sabbath days and honor them. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

4 No one should ever abandon me to worship worthless idols. Neither should anyone fashion for themselves idol statues out of cast metal. Remember: I alone am Yahweh your God!

5 Whenever someone wants to sacrifice a fellowship sacrifice to me, to Yahweh, he should offer it in a way that I will accept. **6** The people of Israel may eat the meat that comes from such a fellowship sacrifice on the day that he offers the sacrifice and on the following day. However, on the third day after he offered the sacrifice, the person who offered the fellowship sacrifice should completely burn the remaining meat. **7** If anyone ever eats the meat from a fellowship sacrifice on the third day after an individual offered it, I will no longer accept whatever sacrifice the individual offered. The meat is now considered desecrated. **8** The people of Israel must hold responsible for addressing his wrongdoing whoever eats that meat

because he has defiled what is set apart for my purposes alone. I, Yahweh, will make the person who does this an outcast. The people of Israel should no longer consider that person to be one of my people.

9 Whenever the people of Israel gather in the harvest of their fields during harvest time, they should leave the corners of the fields unharvested. They should also refrain from picking up anything that they drop while harvesting. **10** Likewise, when the people of Israel harvest the grapes from their vineyards, they should not pick every single grape, nor should they go back a second time to pick up the grapes that they have accidentally dropped. They should leave the unharvested corners of their fields and the dropped grapes to provide food for the poor and the immigrants. Remember, they should do this because I am Yahweh their God!

11 Here is how the people of Israel should treat one another: No one should steal, deceive, or lie to his fellow Israelite. **12** No one should call on me to be a false witness in order to acquit himself from the guilt of his wrongdoing. Doing so would dishonor me and associate the God of Israel with the impurity that comes from wrongdoing. Remember: I am Yahweh!

13 No one should extort the people close to him or steal anything from them. Neither should anyone withhold any wages from hired workers until the next day. **14** No one should ever pronounce a curse against someone who is deaf or intentionally do something that would cause someone who is blind to trip and fall. Instead, the people of Israel must fearfully recognize the power and authority of their God and act accordingly. Remember: I am Yahweh!

15 No one should ever unjustly judge someone. This means that no judge should give special treatment to someone who is poor and seemingly insignificant; neither should they favor someone who is wealthy and seemingly important. Rather, judges should always execute judgment fairly and ethically for the people of Israel.

16 No one should go about spreading false rumors about people. Neither should anyone act in such a way as to oppose the life of someone who is close to him **by giving false testimony in court that might lead to someone's execution**. Remember: I am Yahweh!

17 No one should continue hating someone who is close to him. Clearly admonish your fellow Israelite when he sins so that you will not become guilty as well.

18 No one should try to get revenge against another person or be inordinately angry with one of his own people. Instead, the people of Israel should act lovingly to those who are closest to them. They should treat one another as they treat themselves. Remember: I am Yahweh!

19 The Israelites should be very careful to do what I have told them. They should not breed two kinds of animals that they own, nor should they sow two kinds of seeds in the same field. Likewise, they should not wear clothing that they have made from mixed fabrics.

20 Now, it may happen that a man has sexual relations with a woman and experiences a seminal emission. However, it may be that this woman was a female slave whose master had given her to be another man's wife, but the woman's master had not first paid for her bride price (which would secure her freedom) or outright freed her. If this is the case, then the woman's owner should pay a sum of money for the wrong he has done. The people of God must execute neither person who has sexual relations because she was not a free woman (and, therefore, her master had not properly given her to the man whom she was to marry) when the man had sexual relations with her. **21** However, the man who had sexual relations with the slave woman should bring the required penalty for his guilt to me, to Yahweh, at the entrance of the sacred tent. Specifically, he should offer a goat as a restoring sacrifice. **22** When this happens, the priest will offer the goat as a restoring sacrifice in my presence, so that I, Yahweh, will remove the guilt that the man acquired because of the wrongdoing that he has done. Then I, Yahweh, will forgive the man of the wrongdoing he has done.

23 When the people of Israel enter the land that I have promised to give to them, they should plant various kinds of trees that produce fruit. However, for three years, the people of Israel should consider the fruit of these trees to be forbidden, as if they were a person's uncircumcised foreskin. During this time, no one should eat this fruit. **24** The next year, all the fruit of the trees the people of Israel have planted should be considered set apart for me. The people of Israel should offer them as special offerings of praise to me, to Yahweh. **25** But in the fifth year, the people of Israel may eat the fruit of the trees that they have planted, so that their yield of fruit increases every year. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

26 No one should eat any meat that still has the animal's blood in it. Also, no one should use magic to try to know or control the future.

27 **The people of Israel should not mourn for their dead as the people of the surrounding nations do.** They should not shave the hairs of their heads, nor should they trim the corners of their beads.

28 The people of Israel should not cut their bodies when they mourn for people who have died. Likewise, they should not tattoo themselves. Remember: I am Yahweh!

29 The people of Israel should never disgrace the value of their daughters by forcing them to become prostitutes. If they do so, soon prostitutes will be so numerous that it will be as if the land itself is a prostitute. The land will be filled with all other kinds of depraved behavior.

30 Honor my sacred festivals by celebrating them. Honor the place where you worship me. Remember: I am Yahweh.

31 No one should ever abandon me by inquiring of someone who speaks to the dead, nor should anyone seek the advice of someone who inquires of dead family members. Doing so will only make the people of Israel impure. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

32 The people of Israel should respect elderly people by standing up when they enter the room. They should also honor the elderly. The people of Israel must fearfully recognize the power and authority of their God and act accordingly. Remember, I am Yahweh!

33 When immigrants live among the people of Israel in their land, the people of Israel must not mistreat them. **34** The people of Israel must treat immigrants who live with them like they treat the native-born person. Indeed, the people of Israel should act lovingly toward them, just as if they were their own bodies. This is because the people of Israel were once immigrants in Egypt. Remember, I am Yahweh your God!

35 No one should ever unjustly judge someone with regards to how long something is, how much it weighs, or its volume. **36** This is because the people of Israel should always be using honest measuring sticks, weights on the scales, and measuring baskets. Remember: I am Yahweh your God, who is bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt.

37 The people of Israel should always be careful to do everything that I have told them to do and should obey my customs. Remember, I am Yahweh!”

20 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, **2** “Be sure to tell the people of Israel that any Israelite
or any foreigner who is living in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to the false god
Molech should certainly die. The people living in Israel should kill such a person by throwing
stones at him. **3** I will personally punish such a person. I will make the person who does this
an outcast and remove him from my people. I will do this because he has given his child to the
false god Molech and so defiled my holy space and tainted my reputation. **4** But it may happen
that the people who live in Israel ignore that person when he sacrifices one of his children to
the false idol Molech, and they do not execute that person. **5** If that happens, I will personally
punish that person and his family unit. I will remove that person from my people—him and
anyone else who acts unfaithfully in the same manner by worshiping the false idol Molech.

6 I will punish those who abandon me by inquiring of someone who speaks to the dead or
someone who inquires of dead family members. In doing these things, the people of Israel act
unfaithfully. I will make the person who does this an outcast and remove him from my people.

7 The people of Israel must be careful to keep themselves set apart for me and to be holy
people. They should do this because I am Yahweh their God. **8** The Israelites should habitually
obey my laws and live by them. Remember: I am Yahweh, the one who sets you apart from the
other people.

9 The people of Israel must execute anyone who curses his father or his mother. He has
caused his own death by cursing his father and mother.

10 It may happen that a man commits adultery with another man’s wife. If this happens,
the people of Israel must execute both the man and the woman.

11 A man who has sexual relations with one of his father’s wives has shamed his father.
The people of Israel must execute both that man and woman. They will be responsible for their
own deaths.

12 The people of Israel must execute a man who has sexual relations with his daughter-in-
law. They must execute both that man and the woman. They have done something that is
utterly perverse. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

13 If a man has sexual relations with another man, as he would with a woman, they both have done something that is utterly abominable. The people of Israel must execute both men. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

14 A man who marries both a woman and her mother has done something utterly depraved. The people of Israel must burn all three of them to death so that no one among the people of Israel will continue to commit such a depraved action.

15 The people of Israel must execute a man who has sexual relations with an animal. They must also kill the animal.

16 Likewise, the people of Israel must kill a woman who gives herself to an animal to copulate with it. They must execute both her and that animal. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

17 If a man sleeps with his sister, whether she is his father's or his mother's daughter, and they see one another naked, they have done something disgraceful. Because the man has shamed his sister, I will remove them from among my people so that the people of Israel no longer see them. The people of Israel should hold him responsible for his wrongdoing.

18 If a man sleeps with a woman during her menstrual period, they have both revealed her flowing blood and brought shame on the woman. I will make both of them outcasts and remove them from my people.

19 No man should have sexual relations with his aunt and shame her, whether she is his mother's or his father's sister. In so doing, he would disgrace a close relative. The people of Israel should hold both of them responsible for their wrongdoing.

20 A man who has sexual relations with his uncle's wife has shamed his uncle. I will punish both of them by causing them to die without having any children.

21 If a man has sex with his brother's wife **while his brother is still living**, that is disgraceful. He has dishonored his brother; and they both will die without having any children.

22 The people of Israel should habitually obey all my laws and customs and do everything that I tell them. If they do this, I will not reject and remove them from the land to which I am

bringing them to live. **23** Likewise, the people of Israel must not practice the laws and customs of the people who currently live in the land. I am removing them from the places in which they live because they have done all of these practices. For this reason, I abhor them. **24** But I told the people of Israel, 'You will take their land from them as if you were inheriting it from your father. I will give it to you personally to be your family's possession. The soil in that land is very fertile and produces good crops abundantly. Remember: I am Yahweh your God, who has set you apart from the other people who live around you.'

25 So the people of Israel should learn to distinguish which animals and birds are acceptable to me and pure from those that are unacceptable to me and impure. By doing so, they will not defile themselves by eating unacceptable animals, birds, or other creatures that crawl along on the ground. These animals I have set apart as those which make the people of Israel impure and unable to enter into holy space. **26** In this way, the people of Israel must belong to me, Yahweh, as a people who are set apart and noticeably different from the people who live around them. This is because I am Yahweh, and I am also set apart from every created thing. In the same way, I have set the people of Israel apart from the people of other nations. They belong to me uniquely.

27 But the people of Israel must execute anyone among them who speaks to the dead or inquires of dead family members. The people of Israel must kill them by throwing stones at them. Such people are responsible for their own deaths."

21 **1** Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and tell them that, as long as they live among the people of Israel, they must not make themselves impure by touching a dead body. **2** However, they may touch the dead bodies of their close relatives, such as their mother, father, son, daughter, or brother. **3** They may also touch the dead body of a sister if she is an unmarried virgin and has been living in their house, because she has no husband to bury her. For the sake of burying such a sister, the priests may become impure. **4** However, as long as they live among the people of Israel, the priests must not cause themselves to become impure by touching the dead bodies of his in-laws. Doing so would dishonor the priesthood and associate the God of Israel with impurity.

5 The priests of Israel must not participate in the mourning rituals of the nations who live around Israel. This means that they must not shave their heads or trim the edges of their beards

or slash their bodies in grief. **6** The priests of Israel must be people who are set apart to me, their God. They must not disgrace and tarnish my reputation, because they are the ones who present the gifts of food that the people of Israel will offer to Yahweh. For this reason, the priests of Israel must be set apart in their behavior.

7 The priests of Israel must not marry a prostitute who has defiled herself or a woman who has divorced her husband, because the priests are set apart for God. **8** You, Moses, should make sure that the priests of Israel are set apart to worship and serve me because they are the ones who present the food offerings to me, their God. You, Moses, should think of the priests as belonging to me, because I, Yahweh, am the one who set the priests apart to serve and worship me. I, Yahweh, am set apart from the impurity of the world.

9 If a daughter of a priest disgracefully becomes a prostitute she also disgraces her father. The Israelites must burn her to death.

10 The high priest is the one among his relatives whom I have appointed for his work by pouring on his head the sacred olive oil that the priests use to dedicate people and objects wholly to Yahweh. The high priest is also the one whom God has given the responsibility of wearing the special clothes. He must not allow his hair to be uncombed, nor should he tear his clothes when he is mourning for a dead relative. **11** The high priest of Israel must not enter any place where there is a dead body. To do so would cause him to become impure and unable to perform his work. He should not touch a dead body, even if his father or his mother has died. **12** When one of his close relatives dies, the high priest must not leave the sacred tent to join those who are mourning because the sacred olive oil that you, Moses, have poured on his head has set him apart to serve and worship me. Leaving and mourning would cause him to become impure and unfit for his work and would also defile my sacred tent. Remember: I am Yahweh your God!

13 Remember, the priests of Israel should only marry women who have never had sexual relations. **14** The priests of Israel should not marry widows or divorced women or defiled prostitutes. Rather, they must only marry young, unmarried Israelite women. **15** If they do, their children will remain pure and able to be priests among the people of Israel. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I set the priests apart to serve and worship me."

16 Then Yahweh said to Moses, 17 “Tell Aaron that no one of his descendants who suffers
from a deformity or disability should ever present the food gifts that people offer to me, their
God. 18 In fact, no one who suffers from a deformity or disability may approach my holy
space and offer a sacrifice. This includes anyone who is blind, lame, whose face is disfigured,
whose legs are of unequal lengths, 19 anyone who suffers from a disability in their feet or
hands, 20 anyone who has a misshapen back, anyone who is abnormally short, has defective
sight, has a skin disease of any kind, or whose genitals have been damaged. 21 No descendant
of Aaron, the first high priest, who suffers from any disability or deformity should ever
approach my altar to present the food gifts that the people of Israel offer to me, Yahweh. This
is because he suffers from a disability or deformity. He must never present the food gifts that
the people of Israel offer to me, their God. 22 However, priests who suffer from disabilities or
deformities may still eat any of the sacred food that I have set apart for the priests to eat.
23 Despite this, because of their disabilities or deformities, such priests must not pass through
the special curtain in the sacred tent or approach my altar. If they did that, they would cause
my sacred tent to become impure and unfit for my presence. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I
set these places apart for myself.”

24 So Moses spoke to Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites.

22 1 Then Yahweh said to Moses, 2 “Instruct Aaron and his sons to carefully honor the
holy sacrifices that the Israelites bring to me. The priests represent my holy reputation, they
must not dishonor it. Remember: I am Yahweh!

3 Tell them that, while he is impure, no priest should ever approach my sacred altar to
present a sacrifice that the people of Israel have set aside to belong to me, Yahweh. This
applies to every descendant of Aaron who serves as a priest for as long as there are priests in
Israel. If this ever happens, I will make the priest who does this an outcast and remove him
from my presence. Remember: I am Yahweh!

4 Until the priests declare him to be pure once again, no descendant of Aaron who suffers
from an infectious skin disease or a flowing discharge may eat the special food that I have set
aside from the food gifts that the people of Israel offer to me for the priests to eat. This rule
also applies to any priest who touches a dead body, which is impure, or who experiences an

abnormal genital discharge, [5] or who touches any creature that swarms and crawls along the ground and becomes unclean or who touches a person who is currently impure—no matter the reason for which that person is impure. [6] Remember: any priest who touches anything or anyone impure should consider himself to be impure until the evening of that day. The priest must not eat any of the special food that I have set aside from my food gifts for the priests to eat unless the priest first bathes himself. [7] After the sun sets, the priest should consider himself to be pure once again. He may eat the special food that I have set apart from my food gifts for the priests to eat, because I have made provision for the priests by giving them this food. [8] But no priest should eat the meat from an animal's corpse or from an animal that wild animals killed and someone later found dead. If a priest does this, he makes himself impure and unfit to serve or worship me. Remember: I am Yahweh.

[9] The priests must carefully avoid exactly what I, Yahweh, have told them to avoid. If they do not, they will have shown me disrespect and defiled the sacred food gifts that the people of Israel have offered to me. I will hold them responsible for their wrongdoing and kill them. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I have set the priests apart to serve and worship me.

[10] No one outside of the priest's immediate family may eat the sacred food that I have set apart for the priests to eat. This includes any passing guest that a priest hosts in his home or any hired laborer. [11] However, a slave that a priest has bought with his own money may eat this special food. Likewise, any slave that is born into a priest's household is welcome to eat the sacred food that I, Yahweh, have set apart for the priests to eat. [12] However, when a priest's daughter marries a man who is not a priest, she may no longer eat the sacred foods that the people of Israel have presented to Yahweh as a special contribution of food for the priests to eat. [13] It may happen that a priest's daughter becomes a widow or divorces from her husband and yet has no children. If this happens, and the woman returns to her father's household to live there as she did when she was young, she may eat the special food that I have set apart for the priests to eat. However, no one outside of the priest's immediate family may ever eat this sacred food.

[14] It may happen that a person who is not a priest mistakenly eats the special food that I, Yahweh, have set aside for the priests to eat. If this happens, the person who ate the food must repay the full value of the food that he ate, plus an additional one-fifth of its value, and give the money to the priest to whom the food belonged. [15] By practicing these rules, the priests will

not disrespect and profane the sacred food that the people of Israel have offered as their sacrifice to me, Yahweh. **16** However, if the priests fail to do this, and they eat the special food when they are impure or anyone outside of the priest's immediate family eats the special food, I will hold both the priests and the people of Israel responsible for the guilt of their wrongdoing. I will do this because I am Yahweh, and I have set the priests apart to serve and worship me."

17 Then Yahweh said to Moses, **18** "Tell Aaron, his sons, and all the people of Israel that any Israelite or non-Israelite living among the people of Israel may present wholly burned sacrifices to me, Yahweh. They may present sacrifices because of a vow that they make to me, or freely and unprompted. **19** However, for me to accept such sacrifices, whoever offers a sacrifice that the priest completely burns on the altar must present a totally healthy male animal, whether a bovine, sheep, or goat. **20** This means that no one should ever offer to me an animal that suffers from disabilities or defects. I will not accept these animals for the people of Israel. **21** Any animal that someone presents to me, Yahweh, as a fellowship sacrifice must be totally healthy for me to accept the sacrifice. Whether a person presents it to fulfill an extraordinary vow that he made to me or whether the person offers the sacrifice freely and unprompted, whether bovine or flock animals: no animal presented as a sacrifice to me, Yahweh, must suffer from a disability or deformity. **22** This includes animals that are blind, have broken bones, are maimed, or any animals that suffer from running sores or any visible infectious skin disease. The people of Israel must never present any animal in this condition to me, Yahweh, as a sacrifice. The priests must not burn even a piece of such an animal on my altar. **23** However, the people of Israel may present to me an ox or a sheep that has misshapen or stunted limbs, if they intend the sacrifice to be a voluntary offering. Nevertheless, I will not accept such animals for a sacrifice that someone intends to fulfill a promise that he made to me. **24** Particularly, the people of Israel should never offer to me a bovine or flock animal whose owner has crushed, pulverized, torn off, or removed its testicles. As long as they live in the land of Canaan, the people of Israel must not present such animals as sacrifices to me. **25** The people of Israel must not offer such animals as food gifts to me, their God, even if they have purchased the animal from a non-Israelite, because these animals suffer from disabilities and deformities. I consider such animals as unacceptable sacrifices from you."

26 Then Yahweh said to Moses, **27** "A newborn calf or lamb or goat must remain with its mother for a week after its mother has given birth to it. After that week has passed, I, Yahweh,

will accept the young animal as a sacrifice and food gift to me. **28** However, make sure that the people of Israel do not slaughter a fully grown bovine or flock animal and its young on the same day.

29 The people of Israel may sacrifice an animal to thank me for what I have done for them. When they do this, they should present it in such a way that I will accept the sacrifice for the one presenting it. **30** This means that the people who will eat the meat of such a sacrifice must do so on the same day that the individual offers the sacrifice. He should make sure that he does not leave any of the meat of the sacrifice until the next morning. **Remember:** I am Yahweh!

31 The people of Israel must make a habit of doing everything that I have commanded them to do. Remember: I am Yahweh! **32** This means that the people of Israel should not profane and dishonor my reputation as their God by disobeying what I have told them to do. Instead, the people of Israel should behave in a way that demonstrates that I am set apart from impurity and wrongdoing and that I, Yahweh, live in their midst. Remember: I am Yahweh, and I have set my people apart to serve and worship me! **33** I am the one who rescued the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt so that I could be their God. Remember: I am Yahweh!"

23 **1** Yahweh spoke to Moses, **2** "Tell the Israelite people: I have appointed these sacred festivals. You must announce when the people should gather together to worship me. **3** You may work for six days, but the seventh day is a special day of complete rest. You must gather together to worship me. You must not do any work on that day. This is a Sabbath to honor Yahweh wherever you live.

4 These are the special times that I have chosen, the holy gatherings that you must announce at their proper times. **5** In the first month, on the fourteenth day at twilight, **you must celebrate** the Passover to **honor** Yahweh. **6** On the fifteenth day of this same month is the Festival of Unleavened Bread to **honor** Yahweh. For seven days you must eat bread **that you made** without yeast. **7** On the first day you must gather together for a holy meeting. You must not do any regular work. **8** For seven days you must bring offerings to Yahweh. On the seventh day you must gather again for a holy meeting. You must not do any regular work."

9 Yahweh spoke to Moses, 10 “Tell the Israelite people: When you enter the land that I am
giving you and harvest your crops, you must bring a bundle of the first grain you harvest to the
priest. 11 The priest will lift up the bundle to present it to Yahweh so that Yahweh will accept
your gift. The priest must do this on the day after the Sabbath. 12 On the day you present the
bundle of grain, you must also sacrifice a one-year-old male lamb that has no defects as a burnt
offering to Yahweh.

13 With it you must also bring a grain offering of four liters of fine flour mixed with olive
oil as an offering to Yahweh. It will make an aroma he enjoys. You must also bring one liter of
wine as a drink offering. 14 On that day, you must not eat any bread, roasted grain, or fresh
grain until you have brought this offering to your God. This is a rule that will continue forever
for all your descendants, wherever you live.

15 Count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath when you brought the bundle of
grain as an offering. 16 Count fifty days until the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then bring a
new grain offering to Yahweh. 17 At home, each family must bake two loaves of bread using
yeast and four liters of fine flour. Take them to the priest and he will lift them up high to
dedicate them to Yahweh. This will be the first offering to Yahweh from your harvest.

18 Along with the bread, present seven one-year-old male lambs with no defects, one
young bull, and two rams. Burn them completely on the altar to Yahweh. They and the grain
offering and drink offerings are a present for Yahweh and will make a pleasing aroma for
Yahweh. 19 You must also offer one male goat as a purifying sacrifice and two one-year-old
male lambs as a fellowship sacrifice. 20 The priest will lift up these two lamb offerings high to
dedicate them to Yahweh. He will also offer the loaves of bread that were baked from the first
wheat that you harvest. Those offerings are sacred to Yahweh, but they are for the priests to eat.

21 On that same day announce that the people must gather together for a holy meeting. You
must not do any regular work. This is a rule that will continue forever for all your descendants,
wherever you live.

22 When you harvest your crops, do not harvest all the way to the edges of your fields. Do
not pick up the grain that falls on the ground. Leave it for poor people and foreigners.
Remember: I am Yahweh your God.”

23 Yahweh spoke to Moses, **24** "Tell the Israelite people: On the first day of the seventh month, you must have a special day of rest. You must gather together for a holy meeting **when you hear** the trumpet blast. **25** You must not do any regular work **on that day**. Instead you must bring a present to Yahweh."

26 Yahweh spoke to Moses, **27** "On the tenth day of this seventh month you must gather together for a holy meeting. Show that you are sorry for sinning **by not eating**. Bring a food present to Yahweh. This will be a special day for asking Yahweh to forgive you for the sins that you have committed. **28** Because on that day **the priests** will offer sacrifices to Yahweh your God to ask him to forgive your sins, you must not do any work all day. **29** You must expel from your group and from the Israelite nation anyone who does not show that he is sorry for sinning **by not eating** on that day. **30** I will kill anyone who does any work on that day, right in the middle of his family! **31** You must not work at all! You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live. **32** That day you must all rest completely. Also, you must **not eat** to show that you are sorry for having sinned. Rest from the evening of the ninth day of the month until the evening of the tenth day of the month."

33 Yahweh spoke to Moses, **34** "Tell the Israelite people: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Shelters. This festival to honor Yahweh will last for seven days. **35** On the first day you must gather together for a holy meeting. You must not do any regular work. **36** On each of the seven days of this festival, you must bring food presents to Yahweh. On the eighth day you must gather together again for a holy meeting and bring another food present to Yahweh. This is a special gathering. You must not do any regular work.

37 (To summarize, these are the festivals that Yahweh has appointed. You must announce that these are holy meetings in order to give presents to Yahweh. You will bring these: animal presents that you will burn completely, presents you make from flour, presents **to promise friendship with Yahweh**, and presents of wine. Bring each present on the day that Yahweh commanded. **38** You must celebrate these festivals in addition to worshiping Yahweh on the Sabbath days. You must give Yahweh all those offerings in addition to his regular presents, the presents that people give when they solemnly promise to do something, and any presents that people give to Yahweh voluntarily.)

39 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have harvested your crops, be sure to celebrate the Festival of Shelters to honor Yahweh for seven days. Rest completely on the first day and on the eighth day. **40** On the first day, take the best fruit from your trees, palm branches, leafy branches, and willow branches from the riverbank. Celebrate with joy before Yahweh your God for seven days. **41** Celebrate this festival to honor Yahweh for seven days each year. You must celebrate it in the seventh month. You and all your descendants must always obey these commands. **42** During the seven days of that festival, all of you people who have been Israelites all of your lives must live in shelters. **43** That will remind your descendants that I made their ancestors live in shelters after I rescued them from Egypt. Do not forget that I, Yahweh your God, **am the one who is commanding this**."

44 So Moses told the Israelites about all these special times that Yahweh had chosen.

24 **1** Yahweh also said to Moses, **2** "Command the Israelite people to constantly bring you clear oil made from pressed olives. This is to burn in the lamps **in the sacred tent** in order that those lamps will be lit all the time. **3** Aaron must take care of the lamps in Yahweh's presence continually, so that they will burn all night long. You must obey this rule forever. Outside the curtain of the very holy place which is in the sacred tent **4** on the lampstand that is dedicated to Yahweh, he must constantly take care of the lamps that burn in Yahweh's presence.

5 Also, each week you must take some fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using four and one-half liters of flour for each loaf. **6** Put the loaves in two rows, with six loaves in each row, on the table covered with pure gold in Yahweh's presence. **7** Along each row, place on **the gold table** some pure incense. It will represent the bread, and **the priest will burn** it as a present for Yahweh instead of the bread. **8** The priests must put new loaves of bread on the table each Sabbath day. You Israelites continually offering this gift to me, Yahweh, represents the never-ending covenant between us. **9** When they remove the loaves from the table, they will belong to Aaron and his descendants. They must eat them in a sacred place set aside for this purpose, because they are a very sacred part of the presents to Yahweh. This food will always be for the priestly family."

10-11 There was a man who had an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father. His mother's name was Shelomith. Her father was Dibri from the tribe of Dan. One day the half-Israelite

man was walking in the Israelite camp, and he and an Israelite man started fighting there in the camp. While they were fighting, the half-Israelite man said bad things about Yahweh and cursed Yahweh. Then some people took the half-Israelite man to Moses. 12 Moses had some people guard him until they could find out from Yahweh what they should do to him.

13 Then Yahweh said to Moses, 14 "Take the man who cursed me outside the camp. There all those who heard what he said must put their hands on his head to indicate that he is guilty. Then all the people must kill him by throwing stones at him. 15 Tell the Israelites, 'If anyone curses God, you must punish him for sinning. 16 So you must surely execute anyone who curses Yahweh. All the people must throw stones at him until he is dead. It does not matter if he is a foreigner or an Israelite from birth. You must surely execute anyone who curses Yahweh.

17 Also, if anyone murders another person, the people must surely execute him. 18 And anyone who kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed. 19 If one Israelite injures another Israelite, injure the person who caused the injury in the same way as the injury he caused. 20 If someone breaks one of another person's bones, break the same bone of the person who caused the injury. If someone injures another person's eye, injure his eye. If someone knocks out another person's tooth, knock out one of his teeth. Do to the offender the same as what he did to the other person. 21 Whoever kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed, but the people must execute anyone who murders another person. 22 You Israelites and foreigners who live among you must all have that same law. Remember: I am Yahweh your God.'"

23 Then Moses told the Israelites everything Yahweh had said. So they took the man who had cursed Yahweh outside the camp and killed him by throwing stones at him. The Israelites did exactly what Yahweh commanded them to do through Moses.

25 1 Yahweh said to Moses on Mount Sinai, 2 "Tell the Israelites this: When you enter the land that I am about to give you, you must regularly let the ground rest for a Sabbath to honor me, Yahweh. 3 For six years plant crops in your fields, prune your grapevines, and harvest your crops. 4 But during the seventh year you must allow your fields to rest completely as a

Sabbath **to honor me,** Yahweh. Do not plant seeds in your fields or prune your grapevines during the seventh year. **5** Do not organize harvesting grain or gathering grapes that grow on their own without your planting or pruning. You must allow the land to rest for that one year. **6** But even while it is resting, the land will provide you with food. You, your male and female servants, workers whom you have hired, and people who are living among you temporarily—you all may eat those things. **7** Your livestock and other animals on your land are also permitted to eat whatever the land produces during that year.

8 Count how many rest years you have had. After seven rest years, that is after seven times seven years (which is 49 years), **9** blow trumpets everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month of the next year. These trumpets will announce the Day of Atonement throughout the land. **10** Make this 50 th year a special celebration and announce that everyone in the country is free. This is the year for restoring! **(When you come into the land, Yahweh will give each family some land that is to be theirs permanently.)** You must give back any of that land **that they have had to sell because of debts**. You must also free and send any Israelites who had to become slaves **because of debts** back to their families. **11** The fiftieth year will be a year for restoring. During that year do not plant anything, and do not harvest in your usual manner the crops or grapes that have grown by themselves. **12** Because it is a time of restoring, you will treat it as sacred and eat only what you take directly from the fields.

13 In that year of restoring, everyone should return to his own inherited property.

14 If you sell some **of your land** to a fellow Israelite or if you buy **some land** from one of them, you must treat that person fairly because he is your fellow Israelite. **15** Pay another Israelite for his land an amount depending on the number of years since the last celebration of restoring. He should sell it for an amount based on how many years that you can harvest until the next time for restoring. **16** If there will be many years before the next time for restoring, the price will be higher. If there will be only a few years until the next time for restoring, the price will be lower. He is really selling you the number of crops you can harvest before the next year of restoring. **17** Do not cheat each other. Instead, honor your God. Remember: I, Yahweh, am your God.

18 Obey all my rules and instructions carefully. If you do that, you will continue to live safely in your country. **19** The crops will grow well on the land, you will have plenty to eat, and you will live safely in your country. **20** But you may ask, 'If we do not plant or harvest our crops during the seventh year, what will we have to eat?' **21** **Do not worry,** I will bless your crops very much during the sixth year. That year there will be enough crops to feed for you for three years. **22** You will be able to plant seed during the eighth year and wait for the crops to grow while still eating the food grown in the sixth year. You will continue to eat it until you harvest your crops in the ninth year.

23 You must not sell any of your land to belong to someone else permanently, because the land is not yours. It is really mine, and you are only living on it temporarily like foreigners **and farming it** for me. **24** Throughout the country that you will possess, you must remember that if someone sells some of his land to you, he is permitted to buy it back from you at any time.

25 So if one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of his property, his closest relative (that is, his redeemer) may come and buy that land back from you for the poor man. **26** However, even if a man has no one to buy the land for him, he may prosper again and save enough money to buy that land back. **27** He must calculate how many years there will be until the next year of restoring. Then he must pay, to the man who bought the land, the money that the other man would have earned by growing crops on that land for those years. The buyer must sell it back to the original owner. **28** But if the original owner does not save enough money to buy back the land that he sold, it will continue to belong to the man who bought it until the next year of restoring. In that year the buyer must restore it to him, and the original owner will be able to farm it again.

29 If someone sells a house in a city that has a wall around it, he may buy it back from the man who bought it for one year. **30** If he does not buy it back during that year, then the house in the walled city will belong permanently to the man who bought it, and to that man's descendants. He does not need to return it to the original owner in the year of restoring. **31** But houses that are in villages without walls are considered to be as though they were in a field. So if someone sells one of those houses, he may buy it back at any time. And even if he does not buy it, he will take possession of it again at the year of restoring.

32 The descendants of Levi are a special case however. If they sell their houses in the cities that belong to them, they may buy them back at any time. **33** But even if they do not buy back those houses, they will become theirs again in the year of restoring because those houses are in their cities, on land that the other Israelites had given to them. **34** But they may not sell the pastureland near their towns. It must belong to the original owners permanently.

35 If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and is unable to buy what he needs, others of you must help him as you would help a foreigner who is living among you temporarily. You will help him stay living in your country. **36** If you lend money to him, do not make him pay back more than he borrowed. Instead, show by what you do that you honor your God; you must help that Israelite in order that he will be able to continue to live among you. **37** If you lend him money, do not make him pay back more than he borrowed. If you sell food to him, charge him only what you paid for it. **38** Remember: I am Yahweh your God. I brought you out of Egypt to be your God and to give you the land of Canaan.

39 If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells himself to you, do not force him to work like a slave. **40** Treat him as you treat workers whom you hire or like someone who is living on your land temporarily. He must work for you only until the year of restoring.
41 During that year, you must free him and his children, and he may go back to his family and to the property that his ancestors owned. **42** You will do this because all the Israelites are my slaves. I freed them from being slaves in Egypt. So none of you should buy each other and make each other into slaves. **43** And do not treat the Israelites whom you buy cruelly. Instead, honor your God.

44 If you want to have slaves, you may buy them from nearby people groups. **45** You may also buy some of the foreigners who are living temporarily among you, and members of their clans that were born in your country. You may own them **46** for the rest of your life. After you die, your children may own them. But you must not act in brutal ways toward your fellow Israelites, because they are your relatives.

47 Suppose a foreigner who is living among you becomes rich, and a fellow Israelite becomes poor and sells himself to that foreigner or to a member of his clan. **48** Even after he sells himself, someone may pay back his debt so he can go free. One of his relatives may pay

back his debt so he can go free. **49** An uncle or a cousin or another relative in his clan may pay back his debt so he can go free. Or, if he prospers and gets enough money, he may pay back his own debt so he can go free. **50** He and his master must count the number of years from when he sold himself to the next year of restoring. The price he pays to the man who bought him will depend on the standard pay that a master would give to a hired worker for that number of years. **51** If there are a lot of years that remain until the year of restoring, he must pay a larger amount of the money to go free. **52** If there are only a few years that remain until the year of restoring, he and his master must agree on a smaller amount for him to go free. **53** While he works for a foreign master, the master must treat him like he would treat an annual hired worker. All of you Israelites must make sure that the foreigner does not treat him cruelly.

54 And even if a fellow Israelite who has sold himself to a foreigner is not able to pay to go free by any of these ways, he and his children must go free in the year of restoring. **55** This is because the Israelites are my slaves. I freed them from being slaves in Egypt to be my slaves. Remember: I am Yahweh your God.

26 **1** Do not make idols because they are useless. Do not set up carved figures or sacred stones to worship **as if they were God**. Do not put on your property a stone that someone has carved so you can bow down to it. Worship only me, Yahweh your God. **2** Honor my sacred festivals by celebrating them. Honor the place where you worship me. Remember: I am Yahweh.

3 If you carefully obey all my instructions, **4** I will send rain for you at the proper times in order that crops will grow on your land and there will be plenty of fruit on your trees. **5** You will continue harvesting and threshing grain until it is time to harvest grapes, and you will continue harvesting grapes until it is time to start planting things for the following year. You will have all the food that you want to eat, and you will live safely in your land.

6 Furthermore, I will make you live peacefully in your country. When you go to sleep, you will not be afraid. I will get rid of the dangerous animals from your country. As for raids or wars, there will be none in your country. **7** In fact, you will chase away your enemies and kill them with your weapons. **8** Five of you will chase away a hundred of them, a hundred of you will chase away ten thousand of them, and you will kill them with your weapons.

9 What's more, I will bless you and cause you to have many children. And I will do what I
said that I would do in the covenant that I made with you. **10** While you are still eating food
from last year's harvest, you will have to move some of it to make space to store the food from
the current harvest. **11** I will live with you, and I will never despise you. **12** I will always be
among you and continue to be your God, and you will continue to be my people. **13** I am
Yahweh your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be the
Egyptians' slaves. When you were there, it was as though you were animals that were pulling
plows for the people of Egypt, but I broke the bars of the yokes that they had put around your
necks. I freed you so you could walk with your heads up.

14 But suppose you pay no attention to me; suppose you refuse to obey what I have told
you to do. **15** Suppose that you reject my decrees and despise my laws and do not obey me, but
that instead you reject the covenant that I made with you. **16** In that case, these are the things
that I will personally do to you: I will suddenly send disasters that will ruin you. You will have
diseases that cannot be cured and fevers that will cause you to become blind; these will slowly
kill you. It will be useless for you to plant your fields, because your enemies will eat the crops
that grow. **17** I will reject you, so your enemies will conquer you. People who hate you will
rule over you, and **you will be so frightened that** you will run away even if they are not chasing
you.

18 But after all these things happen to you, if you still refuse to obey me, I will continue to
punish you again and again for sinning **against me**. **19** I will punish you so much that you will
no longer be stubborn or proud. I will not let any rain fall in your land. It will be as though the
sky were made of iron and the ground were as hard as bronze. **20** You will uselessly work very
hard to plant seeds, because crops will not grow in the hard soil in your fields, and fruit will
not grow on your trees.

21 If you stubbornly and hostilely continue disobeying me, I will send plague after plague
on you to punish you for sinning against me like that. **22** I will send wild animals to attack
you, and they will kill your little children and destroy your cattle. There will be very few of
you who will remain alive, with the result that there will be very few people traveling about on
the roads in your country.

23 When you experience those things that I do to punish you, if you still do not pay attention to me, and if you continue to act against me, **24** I myself will act against you, and I will punish you again and again for sinning against me. **25** I will send armies to you to punish you for not doing the things that I commanded you to do in the covenant that I made with you. If you try to escape from your enemies by hiding behind your city walls, I will send plagues to you, and I will allow your enemies to capture you. **26** When I destroy your supplies of food, there will be very little flour with which to make bread. As a result, ten women will be able to bake all their bread in only one oven. When the bread is baked, each woman will divide it among the members of her family, but there will be very little for each one, and when they have eaten all of it, they will still be hungry.

27 After all those things happen, if you still do not obey me, if you still act against me, **28** I will be very angry with you, and I will act against you. I myself will punish you again and again for sinning. **29** You will be so hungry that you will kill your sons and daughters and eat their flesh. **30** I will destroy the places on high hills where you have worshiped idols. I will smash the altars where you burn incense to worship your gods. I will cause people to pile your dead bodies on the lifeless figures of your idols. I will detest you. **31** I will ruin your cities and empty the buildings that you built for worshiping your idols. If you burn offerings on an altar, I will refuse to enjoy their scents. **32** I will completely ruin your country. When your enemies capture it, they will be shocked at what happened. **33** I will enable your enemies to kill you with their swords. I will cause them to scatter the rest of you among other people groups. I will make sure that they ruin your country and destroy your cities. **34** After that happens, as long as you are living in your enemies' countries, no one will be in the land and it will finally be able to rest. During this time, the land will enjoy the sabbath rests it should have had. **35** During all the time that no one is in your land, it will rest—the rest that you never gave it during the sabbath rest years when you lived there.

36 As for you people who will remain alive in the countries to which your enemies will have taken you, I will make you very afraid, so when you hear the wind blowing leaves, you will run away. You will run like someone is trying to kill you, and you will fall down even though no one is chasing you. **37** You will run as if a man with a sword were chasing you, and you will fall down, even though no one is coming behind you. You will stumble over each other trying to flee. You will not be able to stand and fight your enemies. **38** Many of you will

die in your enemies' countries. 39 And those of you who remain alive will slowly die and rot
in your enemies' countries because you and your ancestors all sinned so much.

40 But if your descendants confess that they and their ancestors sinned against me, acted
unfaithfully toward me, and were hostile to me— 41 because of that I became hostile to them
and forced them to go to their enemies' countries—if your descendants humble themselves,
stop being very stubborn and admit that they are guilty, 42 I will keep my promises about the
land of Canaan that I made with your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob. 43 But before that happens, I will force my people to leave their land, with the result
that the land will be able to rest while no one is in it, and while I am punishing the people for
rejecting my laws and hating my decrees. 44 But I will still not reject them or hate them and
destroy them completely in their enemies' countries. I will not cancel the covenant that I made
with them because I am still Yahweh their God. 45 I will keep the promises from the covenant
that I made with your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, something that the people
of all nations heard about. I did this so that I, Yahweh, would be your God."

46 Those are the commandments, the decrees, and the laws that Yahweh established on
Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelite people by giving them to Moses to tell to them.

27 1 Yahweh also said to Moses, 2 "Tell the Israelites these things for me: 'If a man
solemnly promises to set apart another person to belong only to Yahweh, Yahweh will be willing
to set that person free from having to do that if the responsible man pays the priest an amount of
money. 3 The priest must calculate the amount of money in terms of the silver pieces that they
use in Yahweh's sacred tent.

You must pay:

50 pieces of silver for men who are between 20 and 60 years old;
4 30 pieces of silver for adult women who are between 20 and 60 years old;
5 20 pieces of silver for young men who are between 5 and 20 years old;
10 pieces of silver for young women who are between 5 and 20 years old;
6 5 pieces of silver for boys who are between 1 month and 5 years old;
3 pieces of silver for girls who are between 1 month and 5 years old;

7 15 pieces of silver for men who are more than 60 years old;
and 10 pieces of silver for women who are more than 60 years old.

8 If anyone who has made such a solemn promise is very poor and unable to pay to set free the person whom he has given to Yahweh, he must take that person to the priest. The priest will set the price for freeing him to an amount that the person can pay.

9 If someone solemnly promises Yahweh to give him an animal that is acceptable to him, that animal becomes very special to Yahweh; it belongs to him alone. 10 The person who promised to give it must not give another animal instead of the one that he promised. He must not substitute a bad one for a good one or even a better one than the one offered. If he tries to do that, both animals will become dedicated to Yahweh. 11 If the animal that he wishes to give to Yahweh is a kind that is unacceptable as an offering, he must take the animal to the priest. 12 The priest then will decide what its value is, according to the animal's quality. Whatever value the priest sets will be the value, and that is the price of the animal. 13 If the man who gave the animal later decides that he wants to buy it back, he must pay to the priest that price plus an added one-fifth.

14 Similarly, if someone dedicates his house, setting it apart for the honor of Yahweh, the priest will decide how much it is worth, which will depend on the house's condition. Whatever the priest says that it is worth, that will be its value. 15 If a man sets apart his house for the honor of Yahweh, but later he wants to buy it back, he must pay that price plus an added one-fifth, and then the house will belong to him again.

16 If someone sets apart some of the property that belongs to him and his family for the honor of Yahweh, its value will be determined by the quantity of seed that would be needed to sow that entire tract of land. It will be 50 pieces of silver for each 220 liters of seed. 17 If he dedicates the field during the year for restoring, its value will be the full amount. 18 But if he dedicates his field after the restoration year, the priest will calculate the remaining years to the next one and lower the price accordingly. 19 If the person who dedicated the field later wants to buy it back, he must pay back the field's price plus an added one-fifth. Then the field will belong to that man again. 20 However, if he does not buy it back, or if he also sells it to

someone else, he may never buy it back again. **21** When the year for restoring comes, Yahweh will claim the field permanently as his holy property, and the priest will receive it.

22 If someone dedicates some land that he has bought to Yahweh, land which is not part of the land that his family has always owned, **23** the priest must count the number of years until the next year of restoring to determine how much it is worth. The man must pay that amount to the priest on that day. His payment is a holy gift to Yahweh. **24** However, in the year for restoring, he will restore the land to the person from whom he bought it, the person whose family had always owned that land. **25** The priest must always calculate the amount of money in terms of the silver pieces called shekels that they use in Yahweh's sacred tent. One piece called a shekel is equal to 20 smaller pieces called gerahs.

26 Since firstborn animals already belong to Yahweh, no one may dedicate the firstborn of any cow or sheep for any purpose. **27** If someone gives Yahweh a **firstborn** animal that is not one of the acceptable kinds, he may buy it back by paying its standard price plus an added one-fifth of its value. If he does not buy it back, the priest must sell it for its standard price.

28 However, if someone permanently dedicates anything he owns like a person, animal, or family land to Yahweh, you must not restore it or sell it. Anything that you permanently dedicate becomes Yahweh's especially sacred property.

29 You will not let anyone live from the people whom Yahweh has commanded you to completely destroy. You must execute them all.

30 One tenth of all the crops and grain or fruit that is produced on anyone's land is sacred and belongs to Yahweh. **31** If anyone wants to buy back any of that tenth, he must pay to the priest what it is worth plus an added one-fifth. **32** One of every ten domestic animals belongs to Yahweh. When someone counts his cattle and sheep as they pass under his walking stick, he must set aside every tenth one for Yahweh. **33** When he does that, he must not pick out the good ones or leave the bad ones or substitute bad ones for good ones. If he tries to substitute one animal for another, he must set aside both animals for Yahweh, and he may not buy them back.'"

34 Those are the commands that Yahweh gave to Moses on Mount Sinai to tell to the Israelites.

Deuteronomy

1 **1** In this book are speeches that Moses said to all the Israelites. He spoke to them after they had set up their tents east of the Jordan River. They were in the desert plain along the Jordan near a place named Suph. Suph is between the desert of Paran **on one side of the Jordan River** and the towns of Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di Zahab **on the other side of the river**.
2 It usually takes 11 days to walk from Mount Horeb to Kadesh Barnea. People go by way of Mount Seir.

3 Forty years had passed since the Israelites had left Egypt, and it was the first day of the eleventh month. Moses told the Israelite people everything that Yahweh had commanded him to tell them. **4** He did this after they had defeated Sihon and Og. Sihon, the king of the Amorite people, lived in the city of Heshbon. Og, the king of the region of Bashan, ruled in the towns of Ashtaroth and Edrei.

5 The people were in Moab, on the east side of the Jordan River. There, Moses explained to them God's instructions, saying,

6 "Yahweh our God said to our ancestors at Mount Horeb, 'You have stayed for a very long time at the base of this mountain. **7** Now you must continue traveling. Go to the hilly area where the Amorite people live and go to the nearby areas. These areas include the plain along the Jordan, the hilly area, the smaller hills in the west, the wilderness in the south, the coast of the Great Sea, the land of Canaan, the Lebanon mountains, and northeast to the great Euphrates River. **8** Know that I will give that land to you. I, Yahweh, promised the land to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I promised that I would give it to them and to their descendants. So go and occupy it.'

9 I said to your ancestors during that time, 'I am not able to govern all of you by myself.
10 Yahweh our God has caused us Israelites to become numerous. Today we are as numerous as the stars in the sky. **11** I pray that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, will cause us to become a great many times more numerous than we are now. I pray that he will

bless us just as he promised to do. **12** But I cannot solve all of your problems by myself. **13** So choose some men from your tribes who are wise and who have good sense and whom people respect. Then I will assign them to be your leaders.'

14 Your parents replied, 'We agree with what you have suggested.'

15 So I took the wise men, those whom people respected and whom your families chose from your tribes, and I appointed them to be your leaders. I appointed some to lead groups of 1,000 people, some to lead groups of 100 people, some to lead groups of 50 people, and some to lead groups of 10 people. I also appointed other officers from throughout your tribes.
16 Then, I instructed your leaders, 'Listen when your people are quarreling. Consider each case fairly, including cases where Israelites quarrel with each other. Also consider cases where an Israelite quarrels with someone from another land who lives among you. **17** You must not favor one person more than another. You must treat unimportant people and important people equally. You must not worry about what anyone will think, because you will decide matters as God wants you to decide them. If you are not sure what to decide when people are quarreling, tell me, and I will decide.' **18** At that time I also told you other things that you should do.

19 Then, just as Yahweh our God told us to do, we left Horeb. We went through a huge and dangerous wilderness. The wilderness was on the road to the hilly area where the Amorite people live. We arrived at Kadesh Barnea. **20** I said to your parents, 'You have now come to the hilly area where the Amorite people live. This is part of the area that Yahweh our God is giving to us. **21** Know that Yahweh our God is giving this land to us. So go and occupy it as he commanded. Yahweh is the God whom your ancestors worshiped. Do not be at all afraid.'

22 But your fathers all came to me and said, 'We should first send some men ahead of us to explore the land. Then, they can return and tell us which will be the best road to go there and what kind of towns are there.'

23 I thought that what they had planned was good, so I chose 12 men, one man from each tribe. **24** They went into the hilly area as far as the Valley of Eshkol, and they explored the area. **25** They picked some of the fruit that they found there and brought it to us. They reported that the land that Yahweh our God was giving to us was very good.

26 But your parents refused to go and conquer that land. They rebelled against what Yahweh our God had commanded them to do. **27** Your parents stayed in their tents and complained. They said, ‘Yahweh hates us, so he has brought us here from Egypt to allow the Amorite people to destroy us. **28** We do not want to go there. The men whom we sent there have caused us to become very afraid. They have told us that the people there are stronger and bigger than we are. They said that there are very high walls around their towns. They also said that they saw giants there that are descendants of Anak.’

29 Then I said to your fathers, ‘Do not be even a little bit afraid of those people! **30** Yahweh our God will go before you. He will fight for you just as you saw him do for you in Egypt **31** and in the wilderness. You saw how he brought you safely here, just like a man holds and protects his son.’

32 Your parents would not trust Yahweh our God, even though I reminded them of what Yahweh had done. **33** He always went ahead of them while they traveled in the desert. He showed them places to set up their tents. He directed them with the fire during the night and with the cloud during the day.

34 Yahweh heard your parents complaining, and he became angry. He solemnly declared, **35-36** ‘Only Caleb son of Jephunneh will enter the land. He has obeyed me completely. So I will give to him and to his descendants some of the land that he explored. None of the rest of these evil people will ever live in that good land that I solemnly promised to give to your ancestors.’

37 But because of what your fathers did, Yahweh was also angry with me. He said to me, ‘You also will not enter that land. **38** Joshua son of Nun, who is your helper, will enter it. Support him, because he will enable the Israelite people to occupy that land.’

39 Yahweh continued to declare, ‘You said that your enemies would capture your children, **but this did not happen**. Your children are very young, so they do not yet know what is good and what is evil. However, they are the ones who will enter that land. I will give them the land, and they will occupy it. **40** As for you, turn around and go back into the desert, toward the Sea of Reeds.’

41 Then your fathers replied, ‘We have sinned by disobeying Yahweh. We promise now
that we will go and attack the people who live in that land, just as Yahweh our God has told us
to do.’ Then each of their men equipped himself with weapons. They thought that it would be
easy to invade the hill country.

42 But Yahweh said to me, ‘Tell them not to go there and attack those people, because I
will not help them. If they go, their enemy will certainly defeat them.’

43 So I said that to your fathers, but they did not obey what I said. They again rebelled
against what Yahweh commanded them to do. Their soldiers proudly marched up into that hilly
area. 44 Then the men of the Amorite people who lived in that region came out of their towns.
They attacked those soldiers. They chased our soldiers like a swarm of bees would chase a
person. The Amorites pursued your ancestors’ soldiers south from the area of Seir and defeated
them at the city of Hormah. 45 So your fathers went back to Kadesh Barnea and cried out to
request Yahweh to help them, but he did not pay any attention to them. 46 So we stayed there
at Kadesh Barnea for a long time.

2 1 Then we turned around and went through the desert toward the Sea of Reeds as Yahweh
told us to do. We wandered near Mount Seir for a long time.

2 Then Yahweh said to me, 3 ‘You have been wandering around this hilly area for a long
enough time. Now turn and travel toward the north. 4 And tell the people that they are about to
travel near the land that belongs to the descendants of Esau, **who are also descendants of Isaac**,
as you are. They live in the hilly area near Mount Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very
careful. 5 Do not start to fight against them, because I am not going to give you even a tiny bit
of their land. That is because I have given Mount Seir to the descendants of Esau. 6 **When you
travel near their land**, buy food and water from them.’

7 Remember that Yahweh our God has blessed you in everything that you have done. He
knows **what has happened to you** while you have wandered in this huge desert. Yahweh our God
has protected you during those 40 years, and as a result you have had everything that you
needed.

8 So we continued to travel. We avoided going through the hilly area of Seir where the descendants of Esau, who are also descendants of Isaac, live. We turned from the road **that goes along** the plain of the Jordan valley, and **comes up** from the city of Elath and the city of Ezion Geber. We traveled along the wilderness road of the kingdom of Moab.

9 Yahweh said to me, 'Do not bother the people of Moab by starting to fight against them, because I am not going to give you any of their land. The reason is that they are descendants of Lot. I gave them the city of Ar, **their capital, and the other areas in that country**.'"

10 (There were people called the Emites that formerly lived there. They were as populous and tall as the descendants of Anak. **11** People also call both the Emites and the Anakites, Raphaites. The people of Moab call them Emites. **12** The Horite people also formerly lived in the area of Seir, but the descendants of Esau expelled them. They killed them and settled in their land, just as the Israelite people later expelled their enemies from the land that Yahweh gave to them.)

13 "Then we crossed Zered Gorge, as Yahweh told us to do. **14** It had been 38 years from the time we first left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed Zered Gorge. During those years, all the fighting men of that generation of Israelites died, as Yahweh had solemnly said would happen. **15** Furthermore, Yahweh opposed them, so he caused them to die.

16 After all the men who had been old enough to fight had died, **17** Yahweh said to me, **18** 'Today you must travel through the region of Moab, near Ar, their city. **19** When you come near the border of the land where the descendants of Ammon live, do not bother them or start to fight against them. The reason is that they are also descendants of Lot, so I am not going to give you any of the land that I have given to them.'"

20 (People also call that region the land of the Raphaites, who formerly lived there. The Ammonite people call them the Zamzummites. **21** They were as populous and tall as the Anakite people. But Yahweh caused them to die when the Ammonite people expelled them and settled in their land. **22** Yahweh had done the same thing for the descendants of Esau living in the hilly area of Seir. Yahweh eliminated the Horite people on behalf of the descendants of Esau who took over their land and who still live there. **23** As for the Avvite people, they lived

in towns as far **south** as Gaza. The Caphtorite people from the island of Caphtor killed the Avvite people and settled in their land.)

24 "After we had gone through the region of Moab, Yahweh said to us, 'Now cross the Arnon River valley. Know that I will help you to defeat the army of Sihon. Sihon is the king of the Amorites who live in the city of Heshbon. So attack their army and start to take their land from them. **25** Today I will begin to cause everyone, everywhere to be afraid of you. Everyone who hears about you will be very afraid of you.'

26 Then I sent messengers to go from where we were in the Desert of Kedemoth to King Sihon at Heshbon. **I told them to give him** this peaceful message, **27** 'Please allow us to travel through your land. **We promise that** we will stay on the road. We will not turn off to the right or to the left. **28** We will pay you for food and water. We want only to walk through your land **29** until we cross the Jordan River into the land that Yahweh our God is giving to us. Do for us just as the descendants of Esau who live in the area of Seir and the Moabite people who live in the city of Ar did **for us when they allowed us to go through their land.**' **30** But King Sihon of Heshbon would not allow us to go through his country. That is because Yahweh our God caused him to be stubborn so that Yahweh could cause us to defeat his army and take his land, in which we still live.

31 Yahweh said to me, 'Know that I am starting to allow you to defeat Sihon's army and to take the people's land from them. So enter it now until you occupy it fully!'

32 Then Sihon and his soldiers marched out to fight against us at the town of Jahaz. **33** But Yahweh our God caused us to defeat them. We killed Sihon, his son, and all his soldiers. **34** We captured and destroyed all of King Sihon's cities. **We killed** the men, women, and children. We did not allow any of them to remain alive. **35** However, we did take the livestock and valuable things from the cities that we captured. **36** Yahweh our God enabled us to capture all their towns from the city of Aroer in the south, which is at the edge of the Arnon River valley, to the region of Gilead in the north. Some of their cities had walls around them, but we were still able to capture them. **37** But we did not go near the area where the descendants of Ammon live, the banks of the Jabbok River, the towns of the hilly area, or any other place where Yahweh our God told us not to go.

3 **1** Then we turned north and went toward the region of Bashan. Og, the king of that area,
and all his soldiers marched south to fight against us at the city of Edrei. **2** Yahweh said to me,
‘Do not be afraid of him, because I will cause your army to defeat him and all his army. I will
also cause you to capture all their land. Do to him what you did to Sihon, the king of the
Amorite people, who ruled in the city of Heshbon.’

3 So Yahweh our God caused us to defeat King Og and his soldiers. We killed them all. We
did not allow any of them to remain alive. **4** There were 60 cities in that region of Argob, in
King Og’s kingdom of Bashan, but we captured all of them. **5** All those cities had high walls
around them with gates and bars. We also captured many villages that did not have walls
around them. **6** We completely destroyed those cities, just as we had done in the area that King
Sihon ruled. We killed all the men, women, and children. **7** But from those cities we took for
ourselves all the livestock and valuable things.

8 So at that time we took all the land from those two kings of the Amorite people. We took
the land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River in the south to Mount Hermon in the
north.” **9** (The people of Sidon city call that mountain Sirion. The Amorite people call it
Senir.) **10** “We captured all the towns on the plateau and all the region of Gilead. We also
captured all of Bashan as far east as the cities of Salekah and Edrei, which also belonged to
Og’s kingdom.” **11** (Og was the last king who was a descendant of the Raphaite people. His
bed was iron. It was four meters long and two meters wide, according to the standard
measurement. It was in the city of Rabbah in the region of the Ammonites.)

12 “From the land that we captured at that time, I allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad
the land north of the city of Aroer near the Arnon River. I also allotted to them some of the
hilly areas of Gilead, along with the nearby cities. **13** The other part of Gilead and all of
Bashan, which was the region of Argob that King Og had ruled, I allotted to half of the tribe of
Manasseh.” (People call the entire region of Bashan the land of the Raphaites. **14** Jair, a man
from the tribe of Manasseh, conquered all of Bashan as far north as the border of the Geshur
and Maacath territories. He gave his own name to the villages there. **People still call them**
the villages of Jair.)

15 “The northern part of the Gilead region I allotted to the Machir clan, who are descendants of the tribe of Manasseh. 16 I allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the southern part of Gilead, extending south to the Arnon River. The middle of the river is the southern boundary. The northern boundary is the Jabbok River, which is part of the border of the region where the Ammonites live. 17 The border extends from the plain along the east side of the Jordan valley, from the Chinnereth Sea in the north to the Sea of the Arabah” (people also call it the Salt Sea) “in the south and to the slopes of Mount Pisgah on the east.

18 At that time, I told you three tribes, ‘Yahweh our God is giving you this land east of the Jordan River. So now, your soldiers must cross the Jordan River ahead of the men from the other Israelite tribes. Help them to conquer the land. 19 But your wives and children and your very numerous cattle must stay in the towns that I have allotted to you. 20 Your men must help your fellow Israelites until Yahweh enables them to live there peacefully. Help them until they also capture all of the land that Yahweh our God is giving to them, which is on the west side of the Jordan River, just as he did for you here on the east side of the river. After that, you all may return to this land that I have allotted to you.’

21 And I told Joshua, ‘You have seen everything that Yahweh our God did to those two kings, Sihon and Og. He will do the same thing to the people who are now in the land that you will be entering. 22 Do not be afraid of those people, because Yahweh our God is the one who will fight on your behalf.’

23 At that time, I earnestly prayed, 24 ‘Yahweh my Lord, you are the one who has merely begun to show me how very great you are and that you can do powerful things. There is certainly no god in heaven or on earth who can do the powerful things that you have done. 25 So please allow me to cross the Jordan River. Let me see the good land on the west side, the good hilly area, and the mountains in Lebanon.’

26 But Yahweh was angry with me because of what your parents had done. He would not pay attention to me. Instead, he said, ‘That is enough talk from you! Do not talk to me about that again! 27 Climb up to the top of Mount Pisgah. Then look toward the west, east, north, and south. Look at it all carefully because you will not cross the Jordan River to see the land from there. 28 But tell Joshua what he must do. Encourage him because he is the one who will

lead the people across the river. He is the one who will lead them to occupy the land that you will see **from the top of the mountain**.'

29 So we remained in the **Jordan River** valley close to the town of Beth Peor.

4 **1** Now, you Israelite people, obey all the rules and regulations that I will teach you. If you do that, you will remain alive. You will be able to enter and occupy the land that Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, is giving to you. **2** Do not change the words of my commands to you. Obey all the commands of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you.

3 You have seen what Yahweh did at Baal Peor, for example, when he destroyed all the people who worshiped **the god** Baal there. **4** However, all of you who faithfully continued to worship Yahweh our God are still alive today.

5 Never forget that I have taught you all the rules and regulations, just as Yahweh our God told me to do. He wants you to obey them **when you are living** in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. **6** Obey them faithfully because, if you do that, you will show the people of other nations that you are very wise. When they hear about all these rules, they will say, 'The people of this great nation of Israel are certainly very wise!' **7** Even if other nations are great, there is none of them that has a god who cares for them as Yahweh our God cares for us!
8 And there is no other nation, even if it is a great nation, which has laws that are as just as the laws that I am speaking to you today.

9 But be very careful! Do not forget what you have seen God do. Remember those things as long as you are alive. Tell them to your children and your grandchildren. **10** Tell them about the day that your parents stood in the presence of Yahweh our God at Mount Horeb, when he said to me, 'Gather the people together in order that they can hear what I say. I want them to learn to respect me and honor me as long as they are alive. I want them to teach their children to do the same.' **11** Tell your children that your parents came near to the foot of the mountain while the mountain burned with a fire that went up to the sky, and Yahweh covered the mountain with darkness, clouds, and smoke. **12** Then Yahweh spoke to your parents out of the middle of the fire. Your parents only heard him speak, but they did not see him. **13** And he declared to them his covenant that he wants you also to obey. He gave them the Ten

Commandments. He wrote those on two stone tablets. **14** Yahweh told me to teach all the rules and regulations to you in order that you would obey them. He wants you to obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

15 On the day that Yahweh spoke to your parents from the fire at Mount Horeb, they did not see him. So be very careful! **16** Do not sin by making for yourselves any carved figure! Do not make anything that resembles the likeness of anything: man, woman, **17** any animal, any bird, **18** any reptile, or any fish. **19** Do not look up toward the sky and desire to worship anything that you see there, the sun or the moon or the stars. Yahweh our God has given those to help all people everywhere. **20** Yahweh has brought your families out of Egypt, where they were suffering as though they were in a blazing furnace. That is so that they would be people who belong to him, which is what you are today.

21 But Yahweh was angry with me because of what your parents did. He declared that I would never enter the land that he is giving to you. **22** He swore that I would die here in this land and never cross the Jordan River. But you will go across it, and you will occupy that land. **23** Be sure that you do not forget the covenant that Yahweh our God made with you, and do not make a carved figure in the likeness of anything about which he has forbidden you. **24** This is because Yahweh your God wants everyone to worship him alone. He will destroy anyone who worships idols.

25 After you have been in the land of Canaan for a long time and you have children and grandchildren, do not sin by making a carved figure that represents anything. Yahweh says that is evil, and if you do that, you will cause him to become angry. **26** Today I am requesting everyone who is in heaven and earth to watch what you are doing. But if you disobey what I am telling you, you will soon all die in the land that you will be crossing the Jordan River to occupy. You will not live very long there, because Yahweh will completely get rid of many of you. **27** Yahweh will force the rest of you to go and live among the people of many other nations. Only a few of you will survive there. **28** When you are in those nations, you will worship gods that humans have made from wood and stone. They will be gods that cannot see, hear, eat, or smell anything. **29** But while you are there, you will try to know Yahweh your God. If you try with all that you are to know him, he will answer you. **30** In the future, when people mistreat you there and all those bad things happen to you, you will again worship only

Yahweh and obey him. **31** Yahweh is a God who acts mercifully. **If you obey him**, he will not abandon you, cause you to die, or forget the agreement that he solemnly made with your ancestors.

32 Now please think about the past, about the time before you were alive, about all the time since God first created people here on the earth. You could search everywhere. Certainly, nothing has ever happened that is as great **as what Yahweh did for the Israelite people**.
33 Certainly no group has ever remained alive after they heard their God speak to them from the middle of a fire as you yourselves have heard. **34** Certainly God has never before tried to take a huge group of people from one nation **to another location** as he did for us when he brought us out of Egypt. We saw Yahweh our God use his power when he performed miracles, sent plagues, terrified people, and fought the Egyptians for us.

35 Yahweh showed all these things especially to you in order that you would know that only he is truly God and that there is no other God. **36** He allowed your parents to hear him speak from heaven in order that he could discipline them. Here on the earth, he allowed them to see his great fire. He spoke to them from the middle of the fire. **37** Because he loved our ancestors, he chose you Israelites, who are their descendants. By his great power, he brought us out of Egypt. **38** **As they traveled**, he expelled the people of nations that were greater and more powerful than we were. This is so that we could capture and live in their land, as we are about to do today.

39 So today you should think about the fact that Yahweh is God, that **he rules** in heaven and also on the earth, and that there is no other god. **40** Obey all the rules and regulations that I am giving to you today. This is so that things will go well for you and your descendants and so that you will live a long time in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, so **it will belong to you** forever."

41 Then Moses chose three cities that are on the east side of the Jordan River. **42** If someone accidentally killed another person, a person who had not been his enemy previously, he could escape to one of those cities. He would be safe there **because the people there would protect him**. **43** For the tribe of Reuben, Moses chose the city of Bezer in the wilderness. For the tribe of Gad, he chose the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead. For the tribe of Manasseh, he chose the city of Golan in the region of Bashan.

44 Moses gave God's instructions to the Israelite people. 45 They included all the
instructions, rules, and regulations that Moses told the Israelite people after they had come out
of Egypt, 46 when they were in the valley east of the Jordan River. They were across from the
town of Beth Peor, in the land Sihon, the king of the Amorite people, who lived in the city of
Heshbon, had previously ruled. Moses and the other Israelites had defeated his army when they
came out of Egypt. 47 They captured Sihon's land and the land that Og, the king of the region
of Bashan, had ruled. Those were the two kings who ruled the Amorite people in the area east
of the Jordan River. 48 Their land extended from the city of Aroer in the south along the edge
of the valley of Arnon, as far north as Mount Sion, which people also call Mount Hermon.
49 It also included all the area in the plain east of the Jordan River, extending to the Sea of the
Arabah and east to the slopes of Mount Pisgah.

5 1 Moses summoned all the people of Israel and said to them, "You Israelite people, listen
to all the rules that I am commanding you today. Learn them and be sure to obey them.
2 When we were at Mount Horeb, Yahweh our God made a covenant with us. 3 But this
covenant was not only for our ancestors; he made it also for us who are alive now. 4 Yahweh
personally spoke with us on that mountain, from the middle of the fire. 5 On that day, I stood
between Yahweh and your parents in order to tell them what he said. That was because they
were afraid of the fire, and they did not want to climb up the mountain. This is what Yahweh
said,

6 'I am Yahweh your God, the one you worship. I am the one who brought you out of the
land of Egypt. I am the one who freed you from being slaves there.

7 Do not worship any god other than me.

8 Do not carve yourself a figure that looks like anything in the sky or that is on the ground
or that is in the water under the ground.

9 Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am Yahweh your God. I
demand that you worship me only! I will punish the descendants of those who
hate me. I will punish their descendants for three, even four generations.

10 However, I will faithfully love forever all of those who love me and obey my commandments.

11 I am Yahweh your God, so do not use my name for the wrong purpose. This is because I will certainly punish those who use my name for wrong purposes.

12 Remember that the seventh day of every week belongs to me. This is according to what I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you.

13 There are six days each week for you to do all your labor. 14 But the seventh day is a day of rest, a day dedicated to me, Yahweh your God. On that day you must not do any work. Neither you nor your sons, your daughters, your male or female slaves, your livestock, and not even foreigners who are living in your country may work.

15 Remember that your families were slaves in Egypt. I, Yahweh your God, brought you out of there by my very great power. As a result, I am commanding that all of you must rest on the seventh day of each week.

16 Honor your father and your mother, just like I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you. Do this in order that you may live a long time in the land that I, Yahweh your God, will give you. Also do this in order that things will go well for you there.

17 Do not murder anyone.

18 Do not commit adultery with anyone.

19 Do not steal anything.

20 Do not tell lies about someone in court.

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

22 Those are the commandments that Yahweh commanded your families when they were at the bottom of the mountain. Yahweh spoke with a very loud voice from the middle of the fire, and there were dark clouds around the mountain. He spoke only those Ten Commandments. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

23 Your parents heard Yahweh's voice when he spoke to them out of the darkness, while there was a big fire burning on the mountain. After that, their leaders came to me. **24** One of them said, 'Listen to us! Yahweh our God showed us that he is very glorious and great when we heard him speak from the fire. Today we have realized that it is possible for us human beings to continue to live even though God has spoken to us. **25** But we are afraid that we will die. We are afraid that this immense fire will burn us all up if we go on hearing Yahweh's voice. **26** We are the only people on earth who have remained alive after hearing the all-powerful God speak to them from a fire! **27** So Moses, you go up the mountain and listen to everything that Yahweh our God says. Then come back and tell us everything that he has said, and we will listen to what he has said and obey it.'

28 Yahweh heard your leaders say that. When I went back up the mountain, Yahweh said to me, 'I have heard what your leaders have said. What they have said is right. **29** I surely wish that they would always have awesome respect for me and obey all my commandments. I desire their worship so that things may go well for them and for their descendants forever.

30 So go down and tell them to return to their tents. **31** But then, you come back up here and stand near me. I will give you all the rules and decrees that I want them to obey. Then you can teach them to the people so that they will obey them when they are in the land that I am giving to them.'

32 Be sure that you do everything that Yahweh our God has commanded us to do. Be sure to obey his commandments. **33** Conduct your lives as Yahweh our God has commanded us to do. This is so that you may live a long time. Also, this is so that things may go well for you when you are living in the land that you will occupy.

6 **1** These are the commandments, rules, and decrees that Yahweh our God commanded me to teach to you. He wants you to obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. **2** He wants you to honor him. He wants you and your descendants to always obey all these rules and regulations that I am giving to you. This is so that you may live for a long time. **3** So, you Israelite people, listen to them carefully and obey them. If you do that, things will go well with you. Also, you will become a very numerous nation when you are living in that very fertile land. That is what Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, promised would happen.

4 You Israelite people, listen! Only Yahweh is our God. **5** You must love him with all your inner being and with all that you feel and in every way that you can. **6** Remember these commands that I am giving to you today. **7** Teach them to your children again and again. Talk about them **at every opportunity,** such as when you are in your houses and when you are walking outside. Talk about them also when you are resting and when you are working.
8 **Write copies of them** and tie them to your arms and foreheads **to help you to remember them**.
9 Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your city gates.

10 Yahweh our God solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would give you a land that already has in it large and prosperous cities that you did not build. **11** He said that the houses in those cities will already be full of many good things that someone else put there. There will be wells that someone else dug. There will be vineyards and olive trees that someone else planted. So when Yahweh brings you into that land, and you have all that you want to eat, **12** be sure to remember Yahweh, who rescued you from being slaves in Egypt **and gave all these things to you**.

13 You must deeply respect Yahweh our God, and you must worship him alone. When you make a solemn oath, say that he should punish you if you do not do what you have promised.
14 You must not worship any other gods, the gods that the peoples who live near you worship.
15 This is because Yahweh our God, who has a special relationship with you will not accept people who worship anyone or anything other than him. So if you worship any other god, Yahweh will be very angry with you, and he will destroy you completely. **16** Do not do sinful things to find out whether Yahweh will punish you or not, as your parents did at Massah. **17** Be sure that you always obey all the laws, the weighty instructions, and the regulations that he has given to you. **18** Do what Yahweh says is right and good. If you do that, things will go well with you. You will be able to enter and occupy the good land that Yahweh solemnly promised to give to our ancestors. **19** He will do that by driving out your enemies from that land, just as he promised to do.

20 In the future, your children will ask you, 'Why did Yahweh our God command us to obey all these rules and decrees?' **21** Then you will tell them, 'Our families were slaves of the king in Egypt. Yahweh brought them out of Egypt by his great power. **22** They saw him do

many kinds of miracles and terrifying things to the people of Egypt and to the king and his officials. **23** He rescued our families from Egypt and brought them here to give them this land. This is just as he solemnly promised our ancestors that he would do. **24** And he commanded us to obey all these laws and to honor him. This is so that things will always go well with us and so that he will protect our nation, as he is doing now. **25** Yahweh our God will approve of us if we carefully obey everything that he has commanded us to do.'

7 **1** Yahweh our God will take you into the land that you will soon enter and occupy. As you advance, he will expel these people groups that are more powerful and more numerous than you are. They are the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **2** When Yahweh our God enables you to defeat them, you must kill them all. You must make no agreement with them, and you must not act mercifully toward them. **3** You must not marry any of them. You must not allow your daughters to marry any of their sons or allow your sons to marry any of their daughters. **4** If you did that, those people would persuade your children to stop worshiping Yahweh and to worship other gods. If that happens, Yahweh will be very angry with you, and he will destroy you very quickly. **5** This is what you must do to those people: Tear down their altars, break apart the stone pillars **that they have dedicated to their gods**, cut down the poles **that they use when they worship the goddess Asherah**, and burn their molded idols. **6** You must do that because you are a group of people who belong only to Yahweh our God. He has chosen you from all the peoples in the world to be his own special people.

7 It was not because you were more numerous than any other people group that Yahweh chose you. In fact, you are one of the smallest people groups on the earth. **8** Instead, it is because Yahweh loved you and because he wanted to do what he solemnly promised to your ancestors. That is why he rescued you by his great power from slavery in Egypt and from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. **9** So remember that Yahweh is our God. He is faithful to us. He will do what he agreed to do. He will faithfully love forever people who love him and who obey his commandments. **10** But as for those who hate him, he will pay them back. He will punish them and quickly destroy them.

11 So you must be sure to obey all the commandments, rules, and decrees that I am giving to you today. **12** If you pay attention to these decrees and always obey them, Yahweh our God will do what he has agreed to do for you. He will also faithfully love you, which is what he solemnly promised to your ancestors that he would do. **13** He will love you and bless you. He will enable you to have many children. He will bless your fields. As a result, you will have plenty of grain and **grapes to make** wine and plenty of olive oil. You will have many cattle and sheep. He will do all these things for you in the land that he promised to your ancestors that he would give to you. **14** He will bless you more than he will bless any other people group. All of you will be able to have children. All of your livestock will be able to produce offspring.
15 And Yahweh will protect you from all illnesses. He will not make you become sick with any of the dreadful diseases that **our ancestors** knew about in Egypt. But, he will make all your enemies sick with them. **16** You must destroy all the peoples that Yahweh our God enables you to conquer. Do not act mercifully toward any of them and do not worship their gods. If you do that, it would be like falling into a trap **from which you will never be able to escape**.

17 Do not think to yourselves, 'These people groups are more numerous than we are. We will never be able to drive them out.' **18** Do not be afraid of them. Instead, think about what Yahweh our God did to the king of Egypt and to all the people whom he **ruled**. **19** Remember the terrible plagues that your parents saw him inflict on the people of Egypt. Remember the various kinds of miracles that God did in order to bring your families out **of Egypt**. Yahweh our God will do the same kind of things to the peoples that you are afraid of now. **20** Furthermore, he will cause them to become terrified. He will destroy those who remain alive and run away to hide from you. **21** Do not be afraid of those people, because Yahweh our God will be with you. He is a great God. He is the one that people are afraid of. **22** He will gradually expel those people groups. You should not **try to** expel all of them at one time. If you did that, the number of wild animals would quickly increase, **and you would not be able to get rid of them**. **23** Instead, Yahweh will enable you to defeat your enemies **one people group at a time**. He will cause them to panic until you have destroyed them. **24** He will enable you to defeat their kings. After you kill them, people will forget them. No people group will be able to stop you. You will destroy all of them. **25** You must burn the carved figures **that represent** their gods. Do not desire to take the silver or gold **decorations** that are on those idols. If you take them for yourselves, they will be like a trap **to cause you to disobey God**. Yahweh hates every part of those idols. **26** You must

not bring any of those disgusting idols into your houses, because if you do that, God will curse you just as he curses them. You must hate and despise those idols, because they are things that Yahweh has cursed, and he promises to destroy them.

8 **1** You must faithfully obey all the commandments that I am giving you today. If you do that, you will live a long time and you will become very numerous. Your people will occupy the land that Yahweh solemnly promised your ancestors **that he would give to you**. **2** And think about how Yahweh our God led us as we traveled through the desert during these past 40 years. He **caused you to have many problems**. This was to cause you to realize that you needed to trust him and not trust in yourselves. He also wanted to test you, to find out what you intended to do, whether you would obey his commandments or not. **3** So he caused you to have problems. He allowed you to become hungry. Then he gave you manna, **food from heaven**, food that you and your parents had never eaten before. He did that to teach you that people need food **for their bodies**, but **they also need food for their spirits. This comes from paying attention to** everything that Yahweh says. **4** During those 40 years, our clothes did not wear out. Also, our feet did not swell **from walking through the desert**. **5** Remember that Yahweh our God corrects us and punishes us, like parents correct their children.

6 So obey the commandments of Yahweh our God. Conduct your lives as he wants you to do and honor him. **7** He is about to bring you into a good land. It has streams that flow down from the hills and flow out of springs in the valleys. **8** It is a land on which wheat and barley grow. It has vineyards, fig trees, and pomegranates. It is a land where there are olive trees and honey. **9** It is a land where there will be plenty of food for you. You will have everything you need. It is a land which has iron **ore** in its rocks and from which you can dig copper **ore** from its hills. **10** **Every day** you will eat until your stomachs are full. You will thank Yahweh our God for the fertile land that he has given you.

11 But **when that happens**, be sure not to forget Yahweh our God by disobeying his commandments, rules, and regulations that I am giving to you today. **12** Do this even when your stomachs are full **every day**, and when you have built good houses and are living in them. **13** One day the number of your cattle and sheep will greatly increase. You will accumulate a large amount of silver and gold. The amount of all your other possessions will also greatly

increase. 14 Even then, be sure that you do not become proud and forget Yahweh our God. He rescued your parents from being slaves in Egypt and brought them out from there.
15 Remember that he guided them while they traveled through that huge and terrible desert. There were poisonous snakes and scorpions there. Remember that the ground was very dry and there was no water. In spite of that, he caused water to flow for them out of solid rock.
16 Remember that in that desert he gave your families manna to eat. Manna was food that they had never eaten before. He did this so they would realize that they needed to trust him and not themselves. He wanted to test them to find out if they would obey him. This is so that he could do many good things for them **when those difficulties ended**. 17 Be sure that you do not think to yourselves that you have acquired all these things by your own power and ability.
18 Remember that it is Yahweh our God who has enabled you to become rich. He does this because he faithfully does what he solemnly promised our ancestors that he would do.

19 Today I solemnly warn you: If you forget Yahweh our God and start to worship and serve other gods, then he will certainly destroy you. 20 If you do not obey Yahweh our God, then he will certainly destroy you just like he will destroy the people groups against which you will fight.

9 1 You people of Israel, listen to me! You will soon cross the Jordan River. In the land that you will enter, there are people groups that are more numerous and more powerful than you are. In that land, there are large cities that have very high walls **around them**. The walls are so high that they **seem to** extend up to the sky. You will take possession of the land that these people groups occupy. 2 The people in the land are strong and tall. Some of them are descendants of the Anakites. You have encountered them, and you certainly have heard people say that no one can defeat the descendants of Anak. 3 I want you to know that Yahweh our God will go ahead of you. He will be like a raging fire. He will be the one defeating and destroying them in front of you. As a result, you will quickly be able to drive out some of them and kill the others. This is just as Yahweh promised that you would do.

4 After Yahweh our God has expelled them before you, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because we are righteous that Yahweh has enabled us to capture this land.' Rather, it is because the people in that land are wicked that Yahweh will drive them out for you. 5 **Again**, it is not because you are righteous or do things that are righteous that you will inhabit that land. It is

because those people groups are very wicked that Yahweh our God will expel them as you advance. It is also because he intends to do what he solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would do. **6** I want you to know that it is not because you are righteous that Yahweh our God is giving you this good land. I say this because you are a very stubborn people.

7 Never forget what your parents did in the desert that caused Yahweh our God to become angry. From the day that we left Egypt until the day that we arrived here, you have continually rebelled against him. **8** Even at Mount Horeb your parents caused Yahweh to become angry. Because he was very angry, he was ready to get rid of **all of** them. **9** I climbed the mountain to receive from him the stone tablets on which he had written the Ten Commandments. I stayed there 40 days and nights. During that time I did not eat or drink anything. **10** Yahweh gave me the two stone tablets on which he had written **the commandments** with his own fingers. They were the words that he had spoken to your parents from the fire on that mountain. This was when they gathered together **at the bottom of the mountain**.

11 At the end of those 40 days and nights, Yahweh gave me those two stone tablets on which he had written those commandments. **12** But then he said to me, 'Go down the mountain immediately! This is because **the people whom you are leading**, the people whom you led out of Egypt, have committed a terrible sin! They have very quickly done what I commanded them not to do. They have made for themselves a metal figure **of a calf to worship**.'

13 Then Yahweh said to me, 'I have been watching these people. I see that they are very stubborn. **14** Let me alone. I am going to destroy all of them, with the result that no one anywhere will remember their names. Then I will enable you to become **the ancestor** of a nation that will be more powerful and numerous than them.'

15 So I turned and went down the mountain. In my hands I carried the two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were **written**. Fire was burning all over the mountain. **16** I looked, and I was shocked to see that your parents had committed a great sin against Yahweh. They very quickly had begun to do what Yahweh our God had commanded them not to do. They had **requested Aaron** to make for them a metal figure of a calf **to worship**. **17** I lifted up those two stone tablets and threw them **on the ground**. They broke into pieces. I did this while they were watching.

18 Then I prostrated myself on the ground in Yahweh's presence as I had done before. I did
not eat or drink anything for 40 days and nights. I did that because your parents had sinned
against Yahweh and caused him to become very angry. 19 I was afraid that because Yahweh
was very angry with them, he would get rid of all of them. But again I prayed that he would not
do that, and again he listened to me and answered my prayer. 20 Yahweh was also very angry
with Aaron for making that golden calf. Yahweh was ready to kill him. But at the same time I
prayed for Aaron also, and Yahweh answered my prayer. 21 Your parents had sinned by
requesting Aaron to make a metal figure of a calf. So I took that figure and I melted it in a fire.
Then, I crushed it and ground it into very tiny pieces. Then I threw those tiny pieces into the
stream that flowed down the mountain.

22 Your parents also caused Yahweh to become very angry by what they did at places that
they named Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah.

23 And when we were at Kadesh Barnea, Yahweh said to your parents, 'Go and capture the
land that I am about to give to you!' But they rebelled against him. They did not trust him, and
they did not obey what he told them to do. 24 Your parents rebelled against Yahweh from the
first day that I knew them in Egypt.

25 So, as I said, I lay on the ground in Yahweh's presence for 40 days and nights because
Yahweh had said that he would get rid of your ancestors. 26 And I prayed to Yahweh, saying,
'Lord Yahweh, these people belong to you. Do not destroy them. They are people whom you
rescued and brought out of Egypt by your very great power. 27 Do not forget what you
promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ignore how stubborn and wicked these people have
been, and the sin that they have committed. 28 If you destroy them, the people of Egypt will
hear about it. They will say that you were not able to bring them into the land that you
promised to give to them. They will say that you took them into the desert only to kill them
there because you hated them. 29 Remember that they are your people. You chose them to
belong to you. You brought them out from Egypt by your very great power.'

10 1 Then Yahweh said to me, 'Cut two stone tablets like the first ones and make a
wooden chest to put them in. Then bring the tablets up to me on this mountain. 2 I will write

on those tablets the same words that I wrote on the first tablets, the ones that you broke. Then you can put them in the chest.'

3 So I made a chest. I used wood from an acacia tree to make it. I cut two stone tablets like the first ones. Then I went up the mountain carrying the tablets. 4 There Yahweh wrote on the tablets the same Ten Commandments that he had written on the first tablets. They are the commandments that he had spoken to your parents from the midst of the fire on the mountain. This was when they had gathered at the bottom of the mountain. Then Yahweh gave the tablets to me. 5 Carrying the tablets, I went down the mountain. Then, just as he had commanded, I put them in the chest that I had made and they are still there."

6 (Then, from Beeroth Bene Jaakan, the Israelite people traveled to Moserah. There Aaron died and people buried him. His son Eleazar took his place and became the great priest.
7 From there, the Israelites traveled to Gudgodah. From there, they traveled to Jotbathah, which was a place that had many streams. 8 At that time, Yahweh chose the tribe of Levi to carry the sacred chest that had the stone tablets, stand in Yahweh's presence in the sacred tent, offer sacrifices, and pray for Yahweh to bless the people. They are still doing those things at the present time. 9 That is the reason that the tribe of Levi did not receive any land like the other tribes did. What they received was the honor of being Yahweh's priests. This is according to what he said they should do.)

10 Moses continued to speak, "As for me, I stayed on the mountain 40 days and nights, just like I did the first time. I prayed, and Yahweh answered my prayers again. He said that he would not destroy your families. 11 Then Yahweh said to me, 'Continue your journey and lead the people to occupy the land. This is the land that I solemnly promised your ancestors that I would give to you.'

12 Now, you Israelite people, I will tell you what Yahweh our God says that you do. He requires you to honor him, to conduct your lives as he wants you to, to love him, and to serve him with all that you desire and all that you feel, 13 and to obey all of his commandments which I am giving to you today. This is for your benefit.

14 Be aware that Yahweh our God owns even the sky and everything that is in it. He also owns the earth and everything that is on it. 15 But although he owns all those things, Yahweh

also loved our ancestors. From all the peoples on the earth he chose us, their descendants, and we are still his people. 16 You must humble yourself and obey Yahweh's covenant. Stop being stubborn! 17 Yahweh our God is greater than all gods, and he is greater than all rulers. He is very powerful. He is impartial, and he does not accept bribes. 18 He makes sure that people treat orphans and widows fairly. He loves even foreigners who live among us Israelite people. He gives them food and clothes. 19 So you must love those foreigners too. This is because you were once foreigners when you were living in Egypt. 20 You must deeply respect Yahweh our God, and you must worship him alone. Be faithful to him. When you make a solemn oath, say that he should punish you if you do not do what you have promised. 21 He is the one whom you must praise. He is our God. We have seen the great and awesome things that he has done for us. 22 When our ancestors, Jacob and his family, went down to Egypt, there were only 70 of them. But now Yahweh our God has caused us to be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

11 1 Because of all that Yahweh your God has done for you, you must love him. Also, you must continually obey all his rules, decrees, and commandments. 2 Remember that it was you and your parents, not your children, who experienced all of the things that Yahweh did to teach you. So I am telling you today to think about everything he did that shows how very great and very powerful he is. 3 Remember the many different miracles that he performed in Egypt. Think about what he did to the king of Egypt and everything there. 4 Your children did not see Yahweh destroy the army of Egypt, their horses, or their chariots. Your children did not see how Yahweh caused the Sea of Reeds to flood and drown the army of Egypt as they were coming after their ancestors. Yahweh continues to make Egypt's army weak even to this day. 5 Your children did not see how Yahweh took care of their families in the desert before they all came to this place. 6 Your children did not see what Yahweh did to the rebels, Dathan and Abiram, the two sons of Eliab from the tribe of Reuben. While all of your families were watching, the earth split open, and they fell into the opening and disappeared. Their families, their tents, their servants, and their animals also disappeared with them. 7 You and your parents have seen all these miracles that Yahweh performed.

8 So obey all the commandments that I am giving you today. This is so that you will be strong and able to enter and occupy the land after crossing the river. 9 This is also so that you will live for a long time in that land. That land is the land that Yahweh solemnly promised your

ancestors that he would give to them and to their descendants. The land is very fertile. **10** It is not like the land of Egypt, where your ancestors lived. In Egypt, they struggled to plant seeds and water the plants. **11** But the land that you are about to enter is a land where there are many hills and valleys. In that land there is plenty of rain. **12** Yahweh takes care of that land. He watches over it every day, from the beginning of each year to the end of each year.

13 Today I am commanding you to love Yahweh our God and to serve him with your entire inner being. If you do that, **14** each year he will send rain on your land at the right times. As a result, you will have grain and grapes to make wine and olives to make olive oil. **15** And he will cause grass to grow in your fields for your livestock to eat. You will have all the food that you want.

16 I warn you to be careful. Otherwise, you might stop worshiping Yahweh and worship false gods. **17** If that happens, Yahweh will become very angry with you. He will prevent any rain from falling. As a result, the crops will not grow. You will soon die **from hunger** in the good land that Yahweh is about to give to you. **18** So, keep thinking about what Yahweh has commanded you. **Write copies of them** and tie them to your arms and foreheads **to help you to remember them**. **19** Teach them to your children again and again. Talk about them **at every opportunity,** such as when you are in your houses and when you are walking outside. Talk about them also when you are resting and when you are working. **20** Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your city gates. **21** Do this so that you and your descendants will live for a very long time in the land. It is the land that Yahweh promised to our ancestors that he would give to them. That land will belong to you and your descendants forever.

22 Faithfully obey what I am commanding you to do. Love Yahweh our God, conduct your lives as he wants you to, and be faithful to him. If you do this, **23** then Yahweh will drive out all the people groups **in that land** as you advance. These are people groups that are more numerous and more powerful than you are. **24** Everywhere you go, the land will be yours. Your territory will extend from the desert in the south to the Lebanon Mountains in the north. It will extend from the Euphrates River in the east to the great sea in the west. **25** Yahweh our God will cause all the people in that land to be very afraid of you. No people group will be able to stop you. It will be just as he promised.

26 Be aware that today I am telling you that Yahweh will either bless you or he will curse you. **27** If you obey the commandments of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you today, he will bless you. **28** But if you do not obey them, stop worshiping him and start worshiping other gods to whom you were never faithful before, he will curse you. **29** And when Yahweh brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, this is what you must do. **Some of** you **must stand** on top of Mount Gerizim and proclaim what will cause Yahweh to bless you. **The others must stand** on top of Mount Ebal and proclaim what will cause Yahweh to curse you."
30 (Those two mountains are west of the Jordan River, west of the plain along the Jordan River, in the land where the Canaanites live. They live close to the sacred trees near Gilgal.)
31 "You will soon cross the Jordan River to occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. When you start to live in that land, **32** be sure to obey all the rules and decrees that I am giving to you today.

12 **1** I will now tell you the rules and decrees that you must faithfully obey in the land. Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, is giving to you the land to occupy. You must obey these laws all the time that you are alive. **2** When you drive out those people groups, you must destroy all the places where they worshiped their gods. These places include places on the tops of mountains and hills and beside large trees. **3** Tear down their altars, demolish the stone pillars **that they have dedicated to their gods**, burn the poles **that they use when they worship the goddess Asherah**, and chop down their carved idols. This is so that no one will ever worship them in those places again.

4 Do not worship Yahweh as **the people in Canaan worship their gods**. **5** Instead, you must go to the place that Yahweh will choose for his presence to be. It will be in the area where one of your tribes will live. Look for his house, and go worship him there. **6** That is the place where you must bring all of your offerings. These include the wholly burned sacrifice, other sacrifices, one tenth of all your produce and animals, special contributions, sacrifices for promises, unprompted sacrifices, and the firstborn animals from your cattle and sheep.
7 There, in the presence of Yahweh our God, you and your families will eat the good things that you have worked to produce, and you will be happy, because he has blessed you **very much**.

8 When you are in that land, you must not do some of the things that we have been doing.
Until now, you have all been worshiping Yahweh the way you want to. **9** This is because you
have not yet arrived in the land that he will allow you to permanently possess. There, you will
be able to live peacefully. **10** After you cross the Jordan River, you will start to live in the land
that Yahweh our God is giving to you. He will protect you from all your enemies that will
surround you. You will live peacefully.

11 Yahweh will choose one place where he wants you to worship him. That is the place to
which you must bring all the offerings that I command you to bring. These include the wholly
burned sacrifice, other sacrifices, one tenth of all your produce and animals, special
contributions, and sacrifices for promises you make to Yahweh. **12** Celebrate there in the
presence of Yahweh, with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns.
Remember that the Levites will not have their own land, like you do. **13** Do not offer your
wholly burnt sacrifice anywhere else. **14** Only offer them in the place that Yahweh will choose.
The place will be in an area that belongs to one of your tribes. That is the only place where you
may offer the wholly burnt sacrifice and do the other things that I am commanding you to do
when you worship him.

15 However, you may kill and eat your animals wherever you live as much as you want.
These animals are blessings from Yahweh your God. Impure and pure people may eat that
meat, just like you would eat the meat of a gazelle or a deer. **16** But do not eat the blood of any
animal. Let the blood drain onto the ground before you cook the meat. **17** Do not eat any
offering for Yahweh where you live. Do not eat the one tenth of your produce and animals that
you are set aside for Yahweh. Do not eat any of the offerings for promises, unprompted
offerings, or special contributions. **18** Instead, you must eat those offerings in the presence of
Yahweh in the place that he chooses. You must do this along with your children, your servants,
and the Levites who live in your towns. You should rejoice in the presence of Yahweh in
everything that you do. **19** Be sure that you take care of the Levites all during the time that you
live in your land.

20 In the future, Yahweh will give you more territory, as he has promised. At that time, if
you want to eat meat in that new territory, you may eat as much as you want. **21** If the place
that Yahweh our God chooses for you to worship him is far from where you live, I will tell you

what to do. You may kill and eat some of your animals where you live, as much as you want.
22 Impure and pure people may eat that meat, just like you would eat the meat of a gazelle or a
deer. 23 But be sure that you do not eat the blood of any animal. This is because blood keeps
humans and animals alive. You must not eat that which sustains life along with the meat.
24 Do not eat the blood. Instead, let it drain onto the ground. 25 If you obey this command and
do what Yahweh says is right for you to do, you and your descendants will prosper.

26 But this is what you must do with your offerings and anything that you promise to give
to Yahweh. You must take those things to the place that he will choose. 27 There you will offer
the animals for the wholly burned sacrifice on the altar. **You will also offer the fellowship
sacrifice there. After you kill the animals, the priest** will take the blood from the animals and
splatter it onto every side of the altar. **Then, the priests will receive their portion of the meat.** You
may eat **the rest of** the meat. 28 Faithfully obey all these commands. If you do that, you and
your descendants will prosper forever. This is because you will be doing what Yahweh our God
says is right for you to do.

29 When you enter the land that you will occupy, Yahweh our God will destroy the people
groups that live there as you advance. 30 After he does that, be sure that you do not worship
the gods of those people groups. If you do, it will be like a trap that will catch you. Do not ask
them how they worshiped their gods just so you can worship Yahweh in the same way. 31 Do
not try to worship Yahweh our God as they have worshiped their gods. This is because they do
disgusting things when they worship them. Yahweh hates those disgusting things. The worst
thing that they do is that they burn their own children on altars for their gods.

32 Be sure to obey all these commands. Do not add anything to these commands, and do
not take anything away from them.

13 1 In the future, there could be people in your community who say that they are
prophets. They may say that they are able to interpret the meaning of dreams or perform
various kinds of miracles. 2 They will say those things to convince you to worship gods that
you have never known about before. But even if what they predict happens, 3 then do not pay
attention to what they say. This is because Yahweh our God will observe how you behave to
find out if you love him with all your inner being. 4 You must conduct your lives as Yahweh

our God wants you to. You must honor him, obey him, do what he tells you to do, and be faithful to him.

5 But you must execute anyone who tells you to disobey Yahweh our God. This includes anyone who says he is a prophet, or anyone who says that he can interpret dreams. This is because Yahweh himself rescued your families from being slaves in Egypt. Those people want to convince you to disobey what Yahweh has told you to do. Execute them to make sure no one in your community does those kinds of evil acts. **6** Your brother, son, daughter, wife, or some close friend might privately urge you to disobey. They might urge you to worship other gods that you and your ancestors never knew about before. **7** They might urge you to worship gods that nearby or faraway peoples worship. **8** If any of them do that, then do not do what they suggest. Do not even listen to them. Do not act mercifully toward them, and do not keep secret what they have done. **9** Execute them! Be the first one to **throw stones** at them to kill them. Then, everyone else must **throw stones at them**, too. **10** Kill such people by throwing stones at them. This is because they tell you to disobey Yahweh our God, who rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt. **11** When you have executed that person, all the Israelite people will hear what happened. They will become afraid, and none of them will do such an evil thing again.

12 When you are living in one of the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, you may hear **13** that some worthless people among you are deceiving the people of their town. They might urge you to worship other gods. **14** Examine the facts about it thoroughly. Suppose you find out that it is true that such a disgraceful thing has happened. **15** Then kill all the people in that town and kill all their livestock, too. Destroy the town completely. **16** Gather all the possessions that belonged to the people who lived there and pile them up in the city plaza. Then burn the town and everything in it. It will be like a burnt offering to Yahweh. The ruins must stay there forever. People must never rebuild that town. **17** You must not take for yourselves anything that Yahweh has said you must destroy. If you do what I say, Yahweh will stop being angry with you, and he will act mercifully toward you. He will cause you to have many children, which is what he promised our ancestors that he would do. **18** Yahweh our God will do all those things if you do what he is telling you to do, obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today, and do what Yahweh says is right for you to do.

14 **1** We are people who belong to Yahweh our God. Do not gash yourselves or shave the hair on your foreheads when you grieve **like the other people groups do**. **2** We belong to Yahweh alone. Yahweh chose us from all the other people groups on the earth to be his special people.

3 Do not eat anything that Yahweh detests. **4** The animals whose meat you may eat are cattle, sheep, goats, **5** all kinds of deer, gazelles, wild goats, and mountain sheep. **6** Those are animals that have split hooves and that also chew the cud. **7** But there are other animals that chew the cud that you must not eat. Those are camels, rabbits, and rock badgers. They chew the cud, but they do not have split hooves. So they are not acceptable for you to eat. **8** Do not eat pigs. They are unacceptable for you to eat. They have split hooves, but they do not **chew** the cud. Do not eat the meat of those animals; do not even touch their dead bodies. **9** You may eat any fish that has fins and scales. **10** But anything else that lives in the water that does not have fins and scales you must not eat. They are unacceptable for you to eat.

11 You may eat the flesh of any bird that is acceptable to Yahweh. **12** But the birds that you may not eat are eagles, large or black vultures, **13** red kites, falcons, or any kind of kite, **14** any kind of raven, **15** ostriches, owls, sea gulls, any kind of hawk, **16** little owls, great owls, white owls, **17** pelicans, carrion vultures, cormorants, **18** storks, any kind of heron, hoopoes, or bats.

19 You must not eat any insect with wings and which swarm. They are unacceptable to Yahweh for you to eat. **20** But other insects with wings are acceptable to eat.

21 Do not eat any animal that has died naturally. You may allow foreigners who live among you to eat those things. You may also sell them to other foreigners. But you are a people group that belongs to Yahweh our God. You must not cook a young sheep or goat in its mother's milk.

22 Once each year you must set apart a tenth of all the crops that you gather from your fields. **23** Take them to the place that Yahweh our God will choose for you to worship him. There you must eat the tenth of your grain, your wine, your olive oil, and the meat of the firstborn male animals of your cattle and your sheep. Do this in order that you may learn to

always honor Yahweh. He has blessed you by giving you these things. 24 It could be that the
place that Yahweh has chosen for you to worship him is very far from your home. As a result,
you might not be able to take the tenth of your crops which are a blessing from Yahweh. 25 In
that case, you must sell the tenth of your crops for money. Then, wrap the money carefully in a
cloth and take it with you to the place of worship that Yahweh has chosen. 26 There, with that
money, you may buy whatever you want to. It could be beef, lamb, wine, or fermented drinks.
There, in the presence of Yahweh, you and your families should eat and drink those things and
be happy. 27 But be sure to not neglect to help the descendants of Levi who live in your towns,
because they will not own any land.

28 At the end of every three years, bring a tenth of all your crops that you have produced in
that year and store it in your towns. 29 That food will be for the descendants of Levi, because
they will not have their own land. That food will also be for the foreigners, orphans, and
widows who live in your towns. They may come to where the food is stored and take what they
need. Do that in order that Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do.

15 1 At the end of every seven years, you must cancel all debts. 2 Do it like this: Each of
you who has lent money to a fellow Israelite must cancel that debt. You must not insist that he
pay it back. You must do that because Yahweh has declared the cancelation of debts every
seven years. 3 During that year you may require foreigners who live among you to pay what
they owe you, but you must not demand that from any fellow Israelite. 4-5 Yahweh our God
will bless you in the land that he is giving to you. If you obey Yahweh our God and obey all
the commandments that I am giving to you today, then there will not be any poor people
among you. 6 Yahweh our God will bless you like he has promised to do. You will be able to
lend money to people of other people groups, but, for your part, you will not need a loan from
any of them. You will control many people groups, but they will not control you.

7 In the towns that Yahweh our God is giving to you, if it happens that there are any
Israelites there who are poor, then do not be selfish and refuse to help them. 8 Instead, be
generous and lend them the money that they need. 9 When the year of canceling debts is near,
do not think to yourself that you should not lend anyone money because they will not need to pay
it back. It would be evil to withhold help from a needy fellow Israelite. If you do that, he could
pray to Yahweh against you. Then Yahweh will say that you have sinned by not helping that

person. **10** Give generously to poor people and not grudgingly. If you give generously to them,
Yahweh will bless you in everything that you do. **11** There will always be some poor people in
your land, so I command you to give generously to poor people, to your fellow Israelites.

12 If any of your fellow Israelite men or women sell themselves to one of you **to become
your slave**, then you must free them after they have worked for you for six years. When the
seventh year comes, you must free them. **13** When you free them, do not allow them to go
empty-handed. **14** Instead, give to them generously from the things with which Yahweh has
blessed you—sheep, grain, and wine. **15** Do not forget that your ancestors were once slaves in
Egypt and that Yahweh our God freed them. So, I am now commanding you to do this.

16 It may happen that one of your slaves tells you they do not want to leave you. Perhaps
he loves you and your household because you have treated him well. **17** In that case, take him
to the door of your house. While he is standing against the doorway, pierce one of his earlobes
with an awl. That will indicate that he will be your slave for the rest of his life. Do the same
thing to any female slave **who does not want to leave you**.

18 Do not complain when you are required to free your slaves. Keep in mind that they
served you for six years, and you got double the value in comparison with a hired worker. If
you free them, Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do.

19 Set aside for the honor of Yahweh our God the firstborn male animals from your cattle
and sheep. Do not force them to do any work for you, and do not shear the wool of the
firstborn animals. **20** Each year, you and your family must kill them and eat their meat in the
presence of Yahweh at the place that he chooses for you to worship him. **21** But if the animals
have any defects, if they are lame or blind, or if they have any other serious defect, then you
must not sacrifice them to Yahweh our God. **22** You may kill and eat the meat of those animals
in your towns. The impure and pure people **may eat it**, just like **anyone may eat** the meat of a
gazelle or a deer. **23** But you must not eat any of the blood. You must drain all the blood on the
ground when you kill those animals.

16 **1** **Each year** honor Yahweh our God in the early spring with the Passover Celebration. It
was on a night in the early spring that Yahweh rescued your families from Egypt. **2** In order to

celebrate, go to the place that Yahweh will choose for you to worship him. There, sacrifice one young animal from your sheep or cattle to Yahweh. **3** When you eat the Passover meal, the bread that you eat must not have yeast in it. You must eat this kind of bread, called the bread of suffering, for seven days. This is to help you to always remember **that your families were suffering in Egypt because they were slaves.** When they left Egypt, they left very quickly.
4 During the Passover Celebration, which will last for seven days, you must not have any yeast **in any house** in your land. Furthermore, you must eat the meat of the animal that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day of the Passover Festival during that night. Do not allow any of it to remain until the next day.

5-6 You must offer the Passover sacrifice only at the place that he chooses for you to worship him. Do not offer that sacrifice in any other town in the land that Yahweh is giving to you. Offer that sacrifice when the sun is setting, at the same time of day that your ancestors started to leave Egypt. **7** Cook the meat and eat it at the place of worship that Yahweh our God chooses. The next morning, you may return to your tents. **8** Each day for six days the bread that you eat must have no yeast in it. On the seventh day, you must all gather to worship Yahweh our God. You must not do any work on that day.

9 Each year, from the day that you start to harvest your grain, count seven weeks. **10** Then, to honor Yahweh our God, celebrate the Celebration of Weeks. Do that by bringing to him an offering **of grain**. Yahweh has blessed you by causing it to grow in your fields during that year. If you had a big harvest, bring a big offering. If you had a small harvest, bring a small offering.
11 You should be joyful in the presence of Yahweh. Their children, their servants, the descendants of Levi who are in that town, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who are living among you, should also be joyful. Bring those offerings to the place of worship that Yahweh will choose.

12 When you celebrate these festivals by obeying these commands, remember that your families were slaves in Egypt.

13 Each year, after you have threshed all your grain and pressed the juice from all your grapes, you must celebrate the Festival of Shelters for seven days. **14** Each married couple along with their children, their servants, the descendants of Levi who are in that town, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who are living among you, should be joyful in the presence of

Yahweh. **15** Honor Yahweh our God by celebrating this festival for seven days in the place that he chooses for you to worship him. You should all be joyful, because Yahweh will have blessed your harvest and all the other work that you have done.

16 So, each year all of you Israelite men must gather to worship Yahweh our God at the place that he will choose, to celebrate three festivals: The Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Celebration of Weeks, and the Festival of Shelters. No one should come before Yahweh without an offering. **17** Every man must give in proportion to the blessings that Yahweh has given you during that year.

18 Appoint judges and other officials throughout your tribes, in all the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. They must judge people fairly. **19** They must not judge unjustly. They must not favor one person more than another. The judges must not accept bribes because a bribe causes a wise person to ignore what is right and misrepresent the words of righteous people. **20** You must be completely fair and just, in order that you may live long enough to occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you.

21 When you make an altar to worship Yahweh our God, do not put next to it any wooden pole that represents the goddess Asherah. **22** And do not set up any stone pillar to worship any idol, because Yahweh hates them.

17 **1** Do not sacrifice to Yahweh our God any cattle, sheep, or goat that has any defect. This is because Yahweh detests that kind of gift.

2 When you are living in the land in one of your towns that Yahweh our God is giving to you, suppose that you discover that some man or woman sins against Yahweh by disobeying the agreement that he has made with you. **3** Suppose that the person has worshiped other gods, the sun, the moon, or the stars. Remember that I commanded you not to do this. **4** Suppose that someone tells you of this idol worship, and you confirm that this detestable thing has happened in Israel. **5** In that case, you must take the man or woman who has sinned outside of your town. Then you must kill that person by throwing stones at him or her. **6** At least two people must confirm that they saw the person sin before you execute that person. If only one person says they saw the sin happen, you must not kill the accused person. **7** The people who saw the

sin happen should throw stones at the guilty person. Then all the other people from that town should throw stones until the guilty person dies. By doing that, you will make sure no one from your community does this evil action of worshiping idols.

8 Sometimes it will be very difficult for a judge to decide what really happened. It could be that he must decide whether someone killed another on purpose or accidentally. Or, it could be that he must decide if one person or another has the legal right in a case. Or, it could be that he must decide whether someone hurt another, or the property of another. If in any town it is very difficult to know what really happened, and the judge cannot decide it, then you should go to the place where Yahweh our God will choose for you to worship him. **9** There, you should explain the case to the descendants of Levi who are priests, and to the judge who is serving at that time. They should decide what should be done. **10** After they make their decision, you must do what they tell you to do. **11** Accept what they have decided, by doing what they say that you should do. Do not try to change in any way what they have decided. **12** You must execute anyone who proudly disobeys the judge or the priest who stands there in the presence of Yahweh and decides what should be done. By doing that, you will make sure no one from all the Israelites does this evil action. **13** Then after that person is executed, all the people will hear about it, and they will be afraid. None of them will proudly disobey anymore.

14 After you occupy and live in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, you might want a king to rule over you, as the nearby peoples do. **15** **Yahweh our God will permit you to have a king.** But, be sure that you appoint someone whom he has chosen. Your king must be an Israelite. A foreigner cannot be your king. **16** After he becomes the king, he should not own a large number of horses. He should not send people to Egypt to buy horses for him. Remember that Yahweh told you that you would never return to Egypt. **17** And he must not marry a lot of wives. If he did that, they might cause him to stop worshiping Yahweh. He must not obtain a lot of silver and gold.

18 When he becomes your king, he must copy these laws on a scroll. He must copy them from the scroll the priests descended from Levi keep. **19** He must keep this new scroll near him and read from it every day of his life. This is so that he may learn to have an awesome respect for Yahweh. Also, this is so that he may faithfully obey all the rules of his law. **20** If he does that, he will not think that he is more important than his fellow Israelites and he will

completely obey Yahweh's commands. As a result, he and his descendants will rule as kings in Israel for many years.

18 **1** The priests, who are all from the tribe of Levi, will not receive any land in Israel.
Instead, they will receive some of the food that other people offer to Yahweh. **2** They will not
receive any land like the other tribes will. What they will receive is the honor of being
Yahweh's priests, which is what he promised them.

3 This is what the law requires that the people do for the priests. When the people bring an ox or a sheep as a sacrifice, they must give to the priests the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach of those animals. **4** You must also give to them the first part of the grain that you harvest, the wine and olive oil that you make, and the wool that you shear from your sheep.
5 You must do this because Yahweh our God has chosen the tribe of Levi from all of your tribes. He did this so that they would always be the priests who would serve him.

6 Suppose that a man from the tribe of Levi who has been living in one of the towns in Israel wants to live in the place of worship that Yahweh has chosen. **7** In that case, he may serve Yahweh there as a priest, just like the other men from the tribe of Levi who have been serving there. **8** He must receive the same amount of food that the other priests receive. He may keep any money that he gets from selling family possessions.

9 When you enter the land that Yahweh our God is giving you, you must not imitate the disgusting things that the people groups who are there now do. **10** You must not sacrifice any of your children by burning them **on your altars**. Do not try to use magic or omens to discover what will happen in the future. Do not practice sorcery. **11** Do not put spells on people. Do not try to talk with spirits of dead people. **12** You must not do those things, because Yahweh hates people who do any of those disgusting things. He is going to drive out these people groups to benefit you because they do those disgusting things. **13** But you must be completely pure for Yahweh **and avoid doing any of those disgusting things**.

14 The people groups that you are about to expel from the land rely on fortune-tellers and people who practice divination. But as for you, Yahweh our God does not allow you to do that.
15 Some day he will send from your people a prophet like me. You must obey him. **16** On the

day that your ancestors gathered at the bottom of the mountain at Horeb, they begged me for help. They told me that they did not want Yahweh to speak to them again. They did not want to see the huge fire **that burned on the mountain**. They were afraid that they would die if Yahweh spoke to them again.

17 Then Yahweh said to me, 'I agree with them. **18** So I will send them a prophet from their people like you. I will tell him what to say, and then he will tell people everything that I tell him to say. **19** If any person does not obey what I have told him to say, then I myself will punish that person. **20** There could be someone who pridefully says that he is a prophet and that his message comes from me, but I did not send him. Or, there could be someone who speaks a message that he says other gods have revealed to him. You must execute that person.'

21 Maybe you wonder how you can tell if a message that someone tells you does not come from Yahweh. **22** If a person claims to be a prophet who speaks for Yahweh, but what that person said will happen does not happen, then **you will know that** Yahweh did not reveal that message to him. That person said it just so that others would think that he is important, and you do not need to take that person seriously.

19 **1** Yahweh our God will destroy the people groups from the land that he is giving to you. You will drive them out from their towns and you start to live in their homes. After that, **2-3** you must divide into three parts the land that Yahweh is giving to you. Then select a city in each part. You must make good roads **in order that people can get to those cities easily**. Someone who kills another person can escape to one of those cities to be safe.

4 This is the rule for someone who has killed another person. If someone accidentally kills another person who was not his enemy, he may escape to one of those cities and be safe.
5 There could be a case where two men go into the forest to cut some wood. The ax head might come off the handle while one of the men cuts wood. Then, the ax head might hit and kill the other man. In that case, the man who was using the ax may run to one of those cities and be safe there. **The people of that city will protect him.** **6** **If there were only one city for the killer to run to,** the killer could be very far away from a safe city. A judge may decide not to execute the killer because the killing was an accident. Then, a relative of the victim may seek

revenge and kill the man in anger before the man can arrive at a safe city. **7** Therefore, I order you to choose three cities **for this purpose**.

8-9 Do everything that I am today commanding you to do. Love Yahweh our God and obey his instructions continually. If you do that, Yahweh our God will give you much more land **than you will have when you first inhabit the land**. You will receive all the land according to what he promised your ancestors. When that happens, select three more cities **in the new land for people to escape to**. **10** As a result, innocent people will not die, and you will not be guilty for allowing them to die in the land that Yahweh is giving to you.

11 In a case where someone hates another person, he might hide and wait for this person to pass by. Then, he might attack and murder this person. In this situation, if the attacker flees to one of those cities, **12** the elders of the murderer's hometown **are responsible for punishing him. They** must send someone to the city where the murderer is hiding and arrest him. Then they must bring him to the victim's relative who is responsible for avenging the murder so that the relative may execute the murderer. **13** Do not pity killers! **Instead, you must execute them.** This is so that you Israelites will not be responsible for the deaths of innocent people. This is also so that you may prosper.

14 In the land that Yahweh is giving you, your ancestors placed stones to mark the borders of properties. When you occupy that land, do not move those markers.

15 When someone accuses another person of any kind of wrong activity or of sinning in any way, one person who says, 'I saw him do it' is not enough **to convict him**. There must be at least two or three people who say that they saw him do it in order for the judge to accept that what he says is true.

16 Suppose that someone falsely testifies that they saw a man sin. **17** Both the accuser and the accused must go to the place of worship. There, they must talk to the priests and judges who are serving at that time. **18** The judges must investigate the case carefully. If the judges discover that one man falsely testified against the other, **19** then the people must punish the false witness. The punishment must be the same as the punishment he suggested for the man that he accused. As a result, you will make sure no one from Israel does this evil action. **20** The rest of the Israelites will learn about the punishment. They will be afraid of the punishment, so

they will not testify falsely. **21** Do not pity that person. If he killed someone, you must kill him. In the same way, **if he harmed** someone's eye, tooth, hand, or foot, **you must cause the same harm to him**.

20 **1** When your fighting men go to fight your enemies and see that they have many horses and chariots and that their army is much bigger than yours, do not be afraid of them, because Yahweh our God, who brought the Israelites safely out of Egypt, will be with you. **2** When you are ready to start the battle, the high priest must stand in front of the fighting men. **3** He must say to them, 'Listen to me Israelite men! Today you are going to fight against our enemies. Do not be timid! Do not be afraid of them in any way at all, **4** because Yahweh our God will go with you. He will fight your enemies for you, and he will enable you to defeat them.'

5 Then the leaders must say to the fighting men, 'If anyone among you has just built a new house and has not dedicated it **to God**, he should go home **and dedicate the house**. If he does not do that, if he dies in the battle, someone else will dedicate the house **and live in it**. **6** If anyone among you has planted a vineyard and has not yet harvested any grapes from it, he should go home. If he stays here and dies in the battle, someone else will harvest the grapes and enjoy the wine made from them. **7** If anyone among you has become engaged to marry a woman but has not married her yet, he should go home **and marry her**. If he stays here and dies in the battle, someone else will marry her.'

8 Then the leaders must also say to the fighting men, 'If anyone among you is afraid or timid, he should go home, in order that he does not cause his fellow soldiers to be afraid like him.' **9** When the leaders have finished speaking to the fighting men, they must appoint commanders over them.

10 When you go up to a city **that is far away** to attack it, first tell the people there that if they surrender, you will not attack them. **11** If they open the gates of the city and surrender, they will all become your slaves to work for you. **12** But if they refuse to surrender peacefully and decide instead to fight against you, your troops must surround the city and break through the walls. **13** Then, when Yahweh our God enables you to capture the city, you must kill all the men in the city. **14** But you may take for yourselves the women, the children, the livestock, and everything else that you want to take from the city. You may enjoy all the things that

belonged to your enemies, the things that Yahweh our God has given to you. **15** That is how you should make war against all the people in cities that are far from the land in which you will settle, not the people in cities in your land.

16 But in the cities that are in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you forever, you must kill all the people and all the animals. **17** You must completely get rid of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Yahweh our God commands you to do this. **18** If you do not do that, they will teach you to sin against Yahweh our God by doing the disgusting things that they do when they worship their gods.

19 When you surround a city for a long time, trying to capture it, do not cut down the fruit trees outside the city. You are allowed to eat the fruit from the trees, but do not destroy the trees, because they certainly are not your enemies. **20** You are permitted to cut down trees you know do not bear fruit and use the wood to make ladders and towers to enable you to go over the walls and capture the city that is resisting you.

21 **1** Suppose that while you are living in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you to inherit, you find the body of a person that someone murdered. If you do not know who killed that person because it was in a field, **2** your elders and judges must go out to where someone found the body and measure the distance from there to each of the nearby towns. **3** Then the elders in the closest town must select a cow that has not had a baby and has never pulled with a yoke, that is, she has never done any work. **4** They must take it to a place near a stream where the ground has never been plowed or planted. There they must break its neck. **5** The priests must go there also, because Yahweh our God has chosen them from the tribe of Levi to serve him and to be his representatives when they bless people. He has also chosen them to settle disputes involving injuries. **6** The elders from the closest town to the body must wash their hands over the young cow whose neck they break, there in the valley. **7** They must say, 'We did not murder this person, and we did not see who did it. **8** Yahweh, forgive us, your Israelite people whom you rescued from Egypt. Do not consider us guilty for murdering an innocent person.' When they do this, Yahweh will forgive the Israelites for the murder, **9** because you will be doing what Yahweh considers to be right. You will not be considered guilty for murdering that person.

10 When your fighting men go to fight against your enemies, and Yahweh our God enables
you to defeat them, and they become your prisoners, **11** one of you may see among them a
beautiful woman that he likes, and he may want to marry her. **12** He should take her to his
home, and there she must shave all the hair off her head and cut her fingernails. **13** She must
change out of the clothes that she was wearing when she was captured. She must stay in that
man's house and mourn for her parents for a month. After that, he may marry her and have sex
with her. **14** Later, if he no longer is pleased with her, he must let her leave him and go
wherever she wants. But because **sending her away** will humiliate her, he may not sell her to
anyone else like a slave.

15 Suppose that a man has two wives, but he loves one of them more than the other.
Suppose that they both give birth to sons, and that the oldest son is the child of the woman that
he does not favor. **16** On the day when that man decides which of his possessions each son will
obtain after he dies, he must not favor the son of the wife that he loves by giving him the larger
share that should go to the firstborn son of the wife he does not favor. **17** He must give the
firstborn son twice as much of his possessions as he gives to any other sons, even though he is
from the wife whom he does not favor. That son is the first proof that the father can reproduce,
and the largest share belongs to him because he was born first.

18 Suppose there is a young man who is very stubborn and is always rebelling against his
parents, and who will not heed what they say to him. Suppose that they punish him but he still
does not pay attention to what they tell him. **19** If that happens, his parents must take him to
the gate of the city where they live and have him stand in front of the elders of the city.
20 Then the parents must say to the elders of that city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and always
rebelling against us. He will not pay attention to what we tell him. He eats too much, and he
gets drunk.' **21** Then all the men of that city must execute him by throwing stones at him. By
doing that, you will make sure no one from among you does this evil action. Everyone in Israel
will hear about what happened and they will be afraid to do what he did.

22 If you execute someone for committing a crime for which he deserves to die, and you
hang his corpse on a post, **23** you must not allow his corpse to remain there all night. You must
bury it on the day that he died, because if you keep the corpse on a post, God will curse the

land. You must bury the corpse that day, in order that you do not defile the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you to inherit.

22 **1** If you see an Israelite's ox or sheep that has strayed away, do not act as though you did not see it. Take it back to its owner. **2** But if the owner does not live near you, or if you do not know who he is, take the animal to your house. It can stay with you until the owner comes, searching for it. Then you must give the animal to him. **3** You must do that same thing if you see a donkey, a piece of clothing, or anything else that someone has lost. Do not refuse to do what you should do.

4 And if you see a fellow Israelite's donkey or cow that has fallen down on the road, do not act as though you did not see it. Help the owner to lift the animal up so that it can stand on its feet again.

5 Women must not wear men's clothes, and men must not wear women's clothes. Yahweh our God hates people who do things like that.

6 If you happen to find a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground, and the mother bird is sitting in the nest on its eggs or with the baby birds, do not take both the mother bird and the babies. **7** You may take the baby birds, but you must allow the mother bird to fly away. Do this in order that things will go well for you and that you will live for a long time.

8 If you build a new house, you must put a railing around the roof. In this way, you will not be guilty of having caused someone's death if a person falls from it and dies.

9 Do not plant any crop in the area where your grapevines are growing. If you do, the harvest of both will become sacred.

10 Do not hitch together an ox and a donkey for plowing your fields.

11 Do not wear clothing that is made by weaving together wool and linen.

12 Twist threads together to make tassels and sew them on the four bottom corners of your cloak.

13 Suppose a man marries a young woman and has sex with her and later decides that he
does not want her anymore, **14** and suppose that he says false things about her, making people
think badly about her by claiming that she was not a virgin when he married her. **15** If that
happens, the young woman's parents must take the sheet that was on the bed when the man and
their daughter were married, which still has bloodstains on it, and show it to the elders of the
city at the gate of the city. **16** Then the father of the young woman must say to the elders, 'I
gave my daughter to this man to be his wife. But now he says that he does not want her
anymore. **17** And he has falsely said that she was not a virgin when he married her. But look!
Here is what proves that my daughter was a virgin! Look at the bloodstains on the sheet where
they slept the night that they were married!' And he will show the sheet to the city elders.
18 Then the elders of that city must punish that man. **19** They must force him to pay 100
pieces of silver to the father of the young woman, because the man has shamed a young
Israelite woman. Also, that woman will be his wife for the rest of his life. He is not allowed to
divorce her.

20 But if what the man said is true, and there is nothing to prove that she was a virgin
when he married her, **21** they must take that young woman to the door of her father's house.
Then the men of that city must execute her by throwing stones at her. They must do that
because she has done something in Israel that is very disgraceful, by sleeping with some man
while she was still living in her father's house. By executing her like that, you will make sure
no one from among you does this evil action.

22 If someone catches a man having sex with another man's wife, you must execute both
of them, the man and the woman. By doing that, you will make sure no one from Israel does
this evil action.

23 Suppose in some town a man sees a young woman who is engaged to another man and
has sex with her. **24** You must take both of them to the gate of that town. There you must
execute them both by throwing stones at them. You must execute the young woman because
she did not shout for help even though she was in the town. You must execute the man because
he has defiled someone who was supposed to be someone else's wife. By doing that, you will
make sure no one among you does this evil action.

25 But suppose out in the open countryside a man meets a young woman who is engaged
to be married, and he forces her to have sex with him. If that happens, you must execute only
that man who forced her to have sex. 26 You must not punish the young woman, because she
did not do anything to die for. This case is like when one man attacks another man in the
countryside and murders him, 27 because the man who forced her to have sex with him saw
her when she was in the open countryside, and even though she called out for help, there was
no one there who could rescue her.

28 If a man forces a young woman who is not engaged to be married to have sex with him,
and if someone sees him while he is doing that, 29 the man who forced her to have sex with
him must pay 50 pieces of silver to the young woman's father, and he must marry her, because
he defiled her. He is not allowed to divorce her during the rest of his life.

30 A man must not disgrace his father by having sex with any of his father's wives.

23 1 No man with crushed testicles or a severed penis may worship with Yahweh's people.

2 No child of an Israelite father and a non-Israelite mother or his descendants, extending to
the tenth generation, may worship with Yahweh's people.

3 No Ammonites or Moabites may worship with Yahweh's people, extending to the tenth
generation. 4 One reason for this is that their leaders refused to give you food and water when
they were traveling from the nation of Egypt to the region of Canaan. Another reason is that
they paid Balaam son of Beor from the town of Pethor in the region of Aram Naharaim to
curse you Israelites. 5 But Yahweh our God did not pay attention to Balaam; instead, he caused
Balaam to bless you rather than curse you, because Yahweh our God loves you. 6 As long as
Israel is a nation, you must not do anything to cause things to go well for those two people
groups to enable them to prosper.

7 But do not despise any Edomites, because they are descendants of your ancestor Isaac,
just like you are. Likewise, do not despise people from Egypt, because they treated your
ancestors well when they first lived in Egypt. 8 The grandchildren of people from Edom and
Egypt who live among you now may worship with Yahweh's people.

9 When your fighting men are living in a camp in time of war, they must avoid doing
things that would make them unacceptable to God. **10** If any soldier becomes unacceptable to
God because semen comes out of his body during the night, the next morning he must go
outside the camp and stay there during that day. **11** But in the evening of that day he must
bathe, and at sunset he will be allowed to come back into the camp.

12 Your fighting men must have a toilet area outside the camp where you can go when you
need to. **13** **When you go to fight against your enemies,** carry something to dig with along with
your weapons, in order that when you need to defecate, you can dig a hole, and then cover up
the hole when you have finished defecating in it. **14** You must keep the camp acceptable to
Yahweh our God, because he is with you in your camp to protect you and to enable you to
defeat your enemies. Do not do anything disgraceful that would cause Yahweh to abandon you.

15 If slaves who escape from their masters come to you and request you to protect them,
do not send them back to their masters. **16** Allow them to stay among you, in whatever town
they choose because they like it, and do not mistreat them.

17 Do not allow any Israelite man or woman to become religious prostitutes. **18** Also, do
not allow any woman who earned money from being a prostitute or any man who earned
money being a homosexual prostitute to bring any of that money into the temple of Yahweh
our God, even if they solemnly promised to pay that money to him. Both of these sexual
practices are disgusting to Yahweh our God.

19 When you lend money or food or anything else to a fellow Israelite, do not charge them
interest. **20** You are allowed to charge interest when you lend money to foreigners, but not
when you lend money to Israelites. Do this in order that Yahweh our God will bless you in
everything that you do in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

21 When you solemnly promise to give something to Yahweh your God or to do something
for him, do not delay in doing it. Yahweh expects you to do what you promised, and if you do
not do it, you will be sinning. **22** But it is not sinful not to solemnly promise things to Yahweh.
23 But if you voluntarily promise to do something for Yahweh our God, you must surely do it.

24 When you walk through someone else's vineyard, you are allowed to **pick and** eat as many grapes as you want, but you must not put any in a container **and take them away**.
25 When you walk along a path in someone else's field of grain, you are allowed to pluck some of the grain by hand **and eat it**, but you must not cut any of his grain with a sickle.

24 **1** Suppose a man marries a woman and later decides that he does not want her because he finds something about her offensive. Then he must write a paper in which he says that he is divorcing her, give the paper to her, and send her away from his house. **2** After she leaves his house she is allowed to marry another man. **3** Suppose that that man later also decides that he does not like her, and that he also writes a paper in which he says that he is divorcing her, gives it to her, and sends her away from his house. Or, suppose that the second husband dies. **4** If either of those things happen, her first husband must not marry her again. She is now unclean to him. Yahweh would consider it to be disgusting if he married her again. You must not desecrate the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you by doing that.

5 When a man has just married a woman, he must not become a soldier in the army. He must not have to do any other kind of government work. He must not do those things during the first year after he gets married. Instead, he must stay at home and do what he can to make his new wife happy.

6 If someone lends money to another person, he may take something from that person as a guarantee that he will pay the money back. But he must not take a millstone. That is what the family needs to grind grain into flour in order to bake bread and stay alive.

7 If someone kidnaps a fellow Israelite to make that person his slave or to sell him to become someone else's slave, you must execute the person-stealer. By doing that, you will make sure no one among you does this evil action.

8 If you are suffering from leprosy, be sure to do everything that the priests, who are from the tribe of Levi, tell you to do. Obey carefully the instructions that I have given to them.
9 Remember that Yahweh our God caused Miriam to have leprosy as your ancestors were coming out of Egypt. That is a warning for you.

10 When you lend something to someone, do not go into his house to take whatever item
he says that he will give you to guarantee that he will return what he has borrowed. **11** Stand
outside his house, and the man to whom you are lending something will bring the item out to
you. **12** But if he is poor **and can only give you his cloak as a guarantee**, do not keep that cloak
overnight. **13** When the sun sets, be sure to take the cloak back to him, in order that he may
wear it while he sleeps. If you do that, he will ask God to bless you, and Yahweh our God will
be pleased with you.

14 Do not mistreat any servants whom you have hired who are poor and needy, whether
they are Israelites or foreigners who are living in your towns. **15** Every day, before sunset, you
must pay them the money that they have earned. They are poor and they need to get their pay.
If you do not pay them right away, they will cry out against you to Yahweh, and he will punish
you for having sinned like that.

16 You must not execute any parents for crimes that their children have committed, and
you must not execute any children for crimes that their parents have committed. You should
only execute someone for the crimes that they themselves have committed.

17 You must do for foreigners who live among you and for orphans the things that the law
commands you to do for them. Also, if you lend something to a widow, do not take her coat
from her as a guarantee that she will return it. **18** Do not forget that you had great troubles
when you were slaves in Egypt, and that Yahweh our God rescued you from there. That is why
I am commanding you to help others who have troubles.

19 When you harvest your crops, if you forget a bundle in the field, do not go back to get
it. Leave it there for foreigners, orphans, and widows. If you do that, Yahweh our God will
bless you in everything that you do. **20** And when you have harvested all your olives from the
trees once, do not go back to pick the ones that are still on the trees. Leave them for foreigners,
orphans, and widows. **21** Similarly, when you pick the grapes in your vineyard, do not go back
a second time to try to find more. Leave them for foreigners, orphans, and widows. **22** Do not
forget that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I am commanding you to be kind to those
who are needy.

25 **1** If people have a dispute and they go to a court, the judge will decide who is innocent and who is guilty. **2** If the judge says that someone must punish the guilty person, he will command him to lie on the ground. While the judge watches, someone will strike the guilty person with a whip a certain number of times depending on what kind of crime he committed. **3** The judge may order someone to strike him up to forty times. Do not strike him more than that, since that would humiliate him publicly.

4 When your ox is walking on the grain to separate it from the stalks, do not prevent it from eating some of grain.

5 If two brothers live on the same property, and one of them who has no son dies, the man's widow should not marry someone who is not a member of his family. The dead man's brother must marry her and sleep with her. It is his duty to do that. **6** If she later gives birth to a son, everyone should consider that first son as the son of the man who died, in order that the dead man's name will not disappear from Israel.

7 But if the dead man's brother does not want to marry that woman, she must go to the city leaders at the city gate. She must say to them, 'My husband's brother refuses to marry me in order that I may give birth to a son who will prevent the dead man's name from disappearing in Israel. He does not want to do his duty to me as a brother-in-law.' **8** Then the elders must summon that man and talk to him. Perhaps he will still refuse to marry that widow. **9** In that case, she must go up to him while the elders are watching, and take off one of his sandals **to symbolize that he would not receive any of her property**, spit in his face, and say to him, 'This is what happens to the man who refuses to preserve his brother's family line.' **10** After that happens, people will know that man's family as 'the family of the man of the pulled-off sandal.'

11 When two men are fighting with each other, and the one man's wife comes up to help her husband by grabbing hold of the other man's private parts, **12** do not act mercifully toward her; cut off her hand.

13 Do not cheat people by having one weight which you use when you buy something and a different weight which you use when you sell something, **14** or by having one measure

which you use when you buy something and a different measure which you use when you sell something. 15 Always be honest in your transactions by using correct weights and correct measures, in order that Yahweh our God will allow you to live a long time in the land that he is giving to you. 16 Yahweh our God hates all those who act dishonestly.

17 Continue to remember what the people of Amalek did to your ancestors when they were coming out of Egypt. 18 They attacked your ancestors as they were traveling, when they were weak and exhausted. Those people were not afraid of God at all, so they attacked your ancestors from the rear and killed all those who were unable to walk as fast as the others. 19 Therefore, when Yahweh our God has given you the land that he promised to give you, and when he has enabled you to rest from fighting all your enemies around you, kill all the people of Amalek, with the result that no one will remember them anymore. Do not forget to do this!

26 1 After you arrive and settle in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you to own forever, 2 each of you must put some of the first crops that you harvest from the land that Yahweh our God is giving you in a basket. Take them to the place that Yahweh will have chosen for you to worship. 3 Go to the high priest who is serving at that time and say to him, 'Yahweh our God solemnly promised our ancestors to give us this land. Today **by this offering** I declare to him that I am settled here **in fulfillment of his promise**.' 4 Then the priest must take the basket of food from you and hold it in front of the altar for sacrificing to Yahweh our God. 5 There in Yahweh our God's presence you must say this: 'My ancestor was a nomadic man in Aram. He took his family to Egypt. They were a small group when they went there, but they lived there and their descendants became a very large and powerful nation. 6 Then the people of Egypt acted very harshly toward them, and they forced them to become their slaves and to work very hard. 7 Then our ancestors prayed to you, Yahweh our God, and you heard them. You saw that they were suffering, and that the Egyptians were forcing them to work very hard and oppressing them. 8 Then by your great power and by performing many kinds of miracles, and other terrifying things, you brought them out of Egypt. 9 You brought us to this land and gave it to us, a land that is very fertile. 10 So now, Yahweh, I have brought to you the first part of the harvest from the land that you gave me.' Then you must set the basket down in Yahweh's presence and worship him there. 11 Then you must celebrate **by eating a meal together** to thank Yahweh our God for all the good things that he has given to you and to your family. You must

invite the descendants of Levi and the foreigners who are living among you to also rejoice **and eat with you**.

12 Every third year, you must bring to the descendants of Levi, to the foreigners who are living among you, to the orphans, and to the widows the offering of a tenth of your crops, in order that in every town they will have plenty to eat. **13** Then you must say to Yahweh our God, 'I have brought to you, from my house, all of the tenth from my harvest this year that I have set aside for you. I am giving it to the descendants of Levi, to the foreigners, to the orphans, and to the widows, as you commanded us to do. I have not disobeyed any of your commands **about the tenth portion**, and I have not forgotten any of your commands **about it**. **14** I have not eaten any food from the tenth portion while I was mourning **for someone who died**. I have not taken any of it out of my house while I was in any condition unacceptable to you. I have not offered any of it to spirits of dead people. Yahweh my God, I have obeyed you and done everything that you have commanded us concerning the tenth portion. **15** So please look down from your holy living place in heaven, and bless us, your Israelite people. Also bless this very fertile land which you have given to us, as you promised our ancestors you would give it to us.'

16 Today Yahweh our God is commanding you to obey all these rules and decrees. So obey them faithfully, with all that you are. **17** Today you have declared that it is Yahweh who is your God, and that you will conduct your lives as he wants you to do, that you will obey all his commands, rules, and decrees, and that you will do all that he tells you to do. **18** And today Yahweh has declared that you are his people, like a prized possession, which is what he promised that you would be, and he commands you to obey all his commands. **19** If you do that, he will cause you to become greater than any other nation that he has established. Other nations will consider you famous and beautiful, and they will praise you. You will be a special people to Yahweh, set apart and holy to him, just as he promised."

27 **1** Moses, along with the other Israelite leaders, said this to the people, "Obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today. **2** Soon you will cross the Jordan River and enter the land that Yahweh, our God, promised to give to you. There, set up some large stones and cover them with plaster. **3** Write on those stones all these laws and teachings, when you enter that very fertile land that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, promised to

give to you. **4** When you have crossed the Jordan River, set up some large stones on Mount Ebal, just as I told you, and cover them with plaster. **5** And build a stone altar there to offer sacrifices to Yahweh our God, but do not do any work on those stones with iron tools. **6** You must make Yahweh our God's alter with uncut stones. You must present wholly burnt sacrifices to him on it. **7** You must make fellowship sacrifices to Yahweh and eat them there. You must rejoice in the presence of Yahweh our God. **8** When you write these laws on those stones, you must write them very clearly."

9 Then Moses, along with the priests descended from Levi, said to all the Israelites, "Israelites! Be quiet and listen to what I am saying! Today you have become the people who belong to Yahweh, our God. **10** So you must do what he tells you, and obey all the rules and regulations that I am giving to you today."

11 On that same day Moses said to the Israelites, **12** "After you have crossed over the Jordan River, the tribes descended from Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin must stand on Mount Gerizim **and request Yahweh** to bless the people. **13** And the tribes descended from Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali must stand on Mount Ebal and listen to the **things that Yahweh will do when he** curses **the people**.

14 The descendants of Levi must shout these words loudly so the Israelites can hear:

15 'Yahweh will curse anyone who carves a figure from wood or stone or casts a figure from metal, and secretly sets it up and worships it.

Yahweh considers that those things are detestable.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

16 'Yahweh will curse anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

17 'Yahweh will curse anyone who removes someone else's markers of property boundaries.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

18 'Yahweh will curse anyone who leads a blind person to go in the wrong direction.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

19 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who refuses to act toward foreigners, orphans, or widows in the way that the law requires.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

20 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who violates his father’s marriage rights

by having sexual relations with any of his father’s wives.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

21 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who has sexual relations with any animal.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

22 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who has sexual relations with his sister or with his half-sister.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

23 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who has sexual relations with his mother-in-law.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

24 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who secretly murders someone else.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

25 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who murders someone who is innocent because someone else has given him money or something else to do that.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

26 ‘Yahweh will curse anyone who does not carefully obey these laws.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

28 **1** If you do what Yahweh our God tells you to do and faithfully obey everything that I am today commanding you to do, he will cause you to become greater than any other people group on the earth. **2** If you obey Yahweh your God, he will bless you in all these ways:

3 He will bless everything that you do when you are in the cities, and he will bless everything that you do when you are working in the fields.

4 He will bless you by giving you many children, abundant crops, plenty of fertile cattle, and many sheep.

5 He will bless you by giving you plenty of grain to make bread.

6 He will bless you everywhere—whether you are at home or elsewhere.

7 Yahweh will enable you to defeat the armies of your enemies; they will attack you from one direction, but they will run away from you in many directions.

8 Yahweh will bless you by filling your barns with grain, and he will bless all the work that you do; he will bless you in the land that he is giving to you.

9 If you obey all that Yahweh our God is commanding you to do, he will keep you as his own holy people, just as he promised you. **10** Then all the peoples on the earth will realize that you belong to Yahweh, and they will be afraid of you. **11** And Yahweh will cause you to prosper very much. He will give you many children, many cattle, and abundant crops in the land that he solemnly promised to our ancestors that he would give to you.

12 At the time that your land needs rain, Yahweh will send it from where he stores it in the sky, and he will bless all your work, with the result that you will be able to lend money to many other people groups, but you will not need to borrow money from them. **13** If you faithfully obey all of the commands of Yahweh our God that I am giving you today, then Yahweh will cause your people group to be superior **to other people groups**, not inferior **to them**. **14** **Yahweh will do all these things for you if** you do not stop obeying what I am commanding you today, and if you never worship other gods.

15 But if you do not do what Yahweh our God tells you to do and do not faithfully obey all his rules and regulations that I am today commanding you to do, he will curse you in all these ways:

16 He will curse everything that you do when you are in the cities, and he will curse everything that you do when you are working in the fields.

17 He will curse you by not giving you much grain to make bread.

18 He will curse you by giving you few and sickly children, crops, cattle, and sheep.

19 He will curse you everywhere—whether you are at home or elsewhere.

20 Yahweh will curse you by confusing and frustrating you in all that you do until your enemies destroy you. They will quickly kill you for your wicked sins and for rebelling against him. **21** Yahweh will make you very sick, until all of you die in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. **22** Yahweh will afflict you with diseases that shrivel your bodies, with fever, with inflammation. It will be extremely hot, there will be violence everywhere, there will be scorching winds, and he will cause your crops to rot. He will afflict you with these until you die. **23** It will not rain so the ground will be very hard and unproductive. **24** Instead of sending rain, Yahweh will send strong winds to blow sand and dust over your land to **ruin your crops and** starve you to death.

25 Yahweh will enable your enemies to defeat you; your soldiers will attack them from one direction, but will run away from them in many directions. People from every other nation will be horrified at what Yahweh has done to you. **26** You will die, and birds and wild animals will come and eat your corpses, and there will not be anyone to scare them away. **27** Yahweh will cause you to have boils on your skin, like he caused the people of Egypt to have many years ago. He will cause you to have tumors, open sores, and your skin will itch, but there will be nothing that will cure those diseases. **28** Yahweh will cause some of you to become insane; he will cause some of you to become blind, and he will cause some of your minds to become confused. **29** At midday you will feel around with your hands, like you are blind or in the dark. You will not prosper in anything that you do. Enemies will continually oppress and rob you, and there will not be anyone to help you.

30 A man will formally arrange to marry a young woman, but someone else will rape her. You will build houses, but you will never live in them. You will plant grapevines, but you will not pick any grapes or drink any wine. **31** Your enemies will butcher your cattle while you watch them, but you will not get any of the meat to eat. They will drag away your donkeys while you watch them do it, and they will not give them back to you. They will take away your sheep and there will not be anyone to help you rescue them. **32** Foreigners will steal your sons and daughters. You will constantly watch for your children to return, but you will not be able to do anything for them. **33** People from a foreign nation will eat all the crops that you worked hard to produce, and they will constantly treat you harshly and cruelly. **34** All these terrible things that you see will cause you to become insane. **35** Yahweh will cause painful boils that

no one can heal to cover your knees and legs, and you will have boils from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head.

36 Yahweh will cause enemies to take your king (who you will have chosen for yourself) and the rest of you to another country where you and your ancestors have never lived. There you will worship strange gods that men made of wood or stone. **37** The people in the nations where Yahweh drives you will use what has happened to you as a horror story, a proverb, and something to mock.

38 You will plant plenty of seeds in your fields, but you will reap only a small harvest, because locusts will eat the crops. **39** You will plant grapevines and take care of them, but you will not pick any grapes or drink any wine, because worms will eat the vines. **40** Olive trees will grow everywhere in your land, but you will not get any olive oil to rub on your skin because the olives will drop on the ground before they are ripe. **41** You will have sons and daughters, but they will not stay with you, because enemies will capture and take them away. **42** Swarms of crickets will eat your crops and the leaves of all your trees.

43 Foreigners who live in your land will become more and more powerful, and you will become less and less powerful. **44** They will have money to lend to you, but you will not have any money to lend to them.

They will be superior to you, and you will be inferior to them.

45 When all these disasters happen to you and continue to happen to you until they destroy you, you will know it is because you did not do what Yahweh your God told you to do and did not obey all the rules and regulations that he gave to you. **46** These disasters that Yahweh will bring on you and your descendants will forever show everyone his mighty power. **47** Because Yahweh our God blessed you abundantly in many ways, you should have served him very joyfully, but you did not do that. **48** Therefore, you will work for the enemies whom Yahweh will send to attack you. You will be hungry and thirsty; you will not have clothes to wear and you will lack everything else that you need. Yahweh will cause you to become slaves and work hard until he destroys you.

49 Yahweh will bring against you an army from very far away. Their soldiers will speak a language that you will not understand. They will swoop down on you quickly like an eagle.
50 They will be fierce looking. They will not act mercifully toward anyone, not even old people or young children. **51** They will kill and eat your livestock, and they will eat your crops, and you will starve. They will not leave for you any grain, wine, olive oil, calves, or lambs. You will all die from hunger. **52** Your enemies will surround your towns throughout the land that Yahweh your God is about to give to you. They will break down the high and strong walls around your towns, walls which you trusted would protect you.

53 When your enemies are surrounding your towns, you will be so extremely hungry that you will eat your own sons and daughters whom Yahweh your God has given to you.
54-55 When your enemies have surrounded your towns, even the most dainty and sensitive men among you will want food very desperately, with the result that they will kill their own children and eat them, because they will not have anything else to eat. They will be greedy and not even share any of it with their brothers or wives whom they love very much or with any of their other children who are still alive. **56-57** Even the most dainty and sensitive women among you, so sensitive and dainty that they have never walked barefoot, will do the same thing. When your enemies have surrounded your towns, those women will be extremely hungry, with the result that, after they give birth to a child, they will secretly kill the baby and eat it and also eat the afterbirth. They will be greedy and will not share any of it with their husbands whom they love very much or with any of their other children.

58 If you do not faithfully obey all of the laws that I am writing, and if you do not have the utmost respect for Yahweh our glorious and amazing God, **59** he will punish you by sending on you and on your descendants great afflictions and plagues which will last for many years.
60 He will bring on you all the plagues that he sent on the people of Egypt, which terrified you, and you will always be sick. **61** He will also send on you many other sicknesses and diseases that I have not talked about in these laws, until you all will die. **62** You became as numerous as the stars in the sky, but only a few of you will remain alive, if you do not obey Yahweh your God. **63** Yahweh was very happy to do good things for you and to cause you to become very numerous, but now he will be happy to ruin you and get rid of you. Those of you who do not die from these plagues, he will snatch away from the land that you will soon be entering to possess.

64 Yahweh will scatter you among all the peoples of the earth, and in those places, you will
worship other gods that men made of wood or stone, gods which you and your ancestors have
never known. 65 In those areas you will not have any peace or rest. Yahweh will make you
afraid, hopeless, and discouraged. 66 You will always be afraid that your enemies will kill you.
You will be very fearful, all day and all night. 67 Because you will be very fearful and because
you will very distressed because of the terrible things that you see, each morning you will say
'I wish it were evening already!' and each evening you will say 'I wish it were morning
already!' 68 Yahweh will send some of you back to Egypt in ships, even though he promised
that he would never force you to go there again. There in Egypt you will try to sell yourselves
to become slaves of your enemies **in order to have food to eat**, but no one will buy you."

29 1 Yahweh commanded Moses to have the Israelites commit to all the following things
when they were in the Moab region **on the east side of the Jordan River**. This was in addition to
what they and Yahweh promised each other at Horeb:

2 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them, "You saw for yourselves what
Yahweh did to the king of Egypt and to his officials and to his entire country. 3 You saw all the
plagues that Yahweh sent on them, and all the various miracles that he performed. 4 But to this
day, Yahweh has not enabled you to understand the meaning of all that you have seen and
heard. 5 For forty years Yahweh has led you while you traveled through the desert. During that
time, your clothes and your sandals have not worn out. 6 You did not have bread to eat or wine
or other fermented drinks to drink, **but Yahweh took care of you,** in order that you would know
that he is your God.

7 And when we came to this place, Sihon, the king who ruled in the city of Heshbon, and
Og, the king who ruled the region of Bashan, came out with their armies to attack us, but we
defeated them. 8 We took their land and divided it among the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and
half of the tribe of Manasseh.

9 So obey faithfully all that you have promised Yahweh you will do, in order that you will
prosper in everything that you do. 10 Today all of us are standing in the presence of Yahweh
our God—I, the leaders of all your tribes, your elders, your officials, all you Israelite men,

11 your wives, your children, and the foreigners who live among us and cut wood for us and carry water for us. **12** You are all here today to agree with Yahweh our God, and to commit to obey him. **13** He is agreeing with you in order to make sure that you are his people, and that he is your God. This is what he promised to do for you, and what he solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that he would do. **14** It is not just that you and Yahweh are agreeing today. **15** What we agree with Yahweh our God here today we are committing for us and also for our descendants who are not yet born.

16 You remember the things that our ancestors suffered in Egypt, and how they traveled through the land that belonged to other people groups after they came out of Egypt. **17** In those countries they saw those disgusting idols made of wood and stone and decorated with silver and gold. **18** So be sure that no man or woman or family or tribe that is here today stops worshiping Yahweh our God and starts worshiping any of the gods of those people groups. That would start to make you seem like something very bad tasting to Yahweh.

19 Be sure that no one here today who hears us agreeing with Yahweh says to himself, 'Everything will go well with me, even if I stubbornly do what I want to.' If you do that, the result will be that Yahweh will eventually destroy all of you, both good people and evil people. **20** Yahweh will not forgive anyone who is stubborn like that. Instead, he will be extremely angry with that person. He will cause all the curses that I have written down here to happen to that person, until Yahweh destroys that person and his family forever. **21** From all the tribes of Israel, Yahweh will choose that individual to suffer all the disasters that I have listed in the scroll that contains this agreement and its laws.

22 In future years, your descendants and people from other countries will see the disasters and the illnesses that Yahweh has caused to happen to you. They will exclaim, **23** 'This land is a wasteland full of sulfur and burning salt! No one is planting anything! Nothing grows, not even weeds! This land is like the place where the cities Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboyim used to be. Yahweh destroyed those when he was very angry with those people.' **24** And the people from those other people groups will ask, 'Why did Yahweh do this to this land? Why was he so angry with the people who lived here?'

25 Then other people will reply, ‘It is because they refused to do what they had agreed with
Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped, when he brought them out of Egypt.
26 Instead, they worshiped other gods that they had never worshiped before, gods that Yahweh
had told them not to worship. 27 So Yahweh became very angry with the people of this land,
and he has caused to happen to them all the disasters that their leader warned them about.
28 Yahweh became extremely angry with them and took them out of their land, and threw
them into another land, and they are still there.’

29 There are some things that Yahweh our God has kept secret, but he has revealed his law
to us, and he expects us and our descendants to obey it forever.

30 1 If, despite Yahweh our God blessing you in all the ways I have just told you about,
you disobey him, and when he curses you in all the ways I have just told you about, and you are
living in the countries to which he will have scattered you, you may realize what you have
done. 2 Then, if you and your children begin to worship Yahweh our God again and faithfully
obey all that I have today commanded you to do, 3 he will act mercifully toward you by
rescuing you. He will bring you back from the nations to which he scattered you. 4 Even if he
scatters you to the most distant places on the earth, Yahweh our God will gather you from there
and bring you back to your land. 5 He will enable you to possess again the land where your
ancestors lived. He will cause you to be more prosperous and more numerous than you are
now. 6 Yahweh our God will change your and your children’s inner beings, with the result that
you will love him with all that you desire and with all that you feel and that you will continue
to live in that land. 7 Yahweh our God will send all the disasters that I have told you about on
your enemies and on those who oppressed you. 8 As you did before, you will do what Yahweh
wants you to do and you will obey all that I have commanded you today. 9 Yahweh our God
will cause you to be very prosperous in all that you do. You will have many children and many
cattle, and you will produce abundant crops. He will again be happy to enable you to prosper,
just like he was happy to enable your ancestors to prosper. 10 But he will do those things only
if you do what he has told you to do, and only if you obey all his rules and regulations that I
have written about in this instruction book, and only if you again worship Yahweh with all that
you desire and with all that you feel.

11 The commands that I am giving to you today are not very difficult for you to obey, and they are not difficult to know. **12** They are not hiding in heaven. You do not need to say, ‘Someone will need to go up to heaven for us and bring them back to us, in order than we can hear them and obey them.’ **13** And they are not on the other side of the sea. You do not need to say, ‘Someone will need to cross the sea for us and bring them back to us, in order than we can hear them and obey them.’ **14** No, his commands are here with you. You have memorized them and you can tell them to anyone. So you can easily obey them.

15 So listen! Today I am allowing you to choose between doing what is good resulting in you living and doing what is evil resulting in you dying. **16** I say again, if you love Yahweh our God, conduct your lives as he wants you to do and obey everything he commands you, you will prosper and become very numerous. Yahweh our God will bless you in the land that you are about to enter and possess.

17 But if you stop worshiping Yahweh, and if you refuse to obey what he says, and if you allow others to persuade you to worship other gods, **18** I am warning you today that you will soon die. Your people will not live for very long in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to enter and possess.

19 I am requesting everyone in heaven and on the earth to testify to you, that today I am allowing you to choose whether you want to live for a long time or to soon die, whether you want Yahweh to bless you or to curse you. So choose to obey and therefore live; choose for you and for your descendants. **20** Decide to love Yahweh our God, to obey him and to always be faithful to him. If you do that, he will enable you and your descendants to live for a long time in the land that Yahweh solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would give to them.”

31 **1** Then Moses also told the Israelites, **2** “I am 120 years old. I am no longer able to go everywhere that you need to go, **so I cannot be your leader any longer**. Furthermore, Yahweh has told me that I will not cross the Jordan River. **3** Instead of me, Yahweh our God will lead you across **the Jordan River**. He will destroy the people groups that are living there for you, in order that you can occupy their land. Yahweh has appointed Joshua to lead you across **the Jordan River** in my place. **4** Yahweh will do to those people groups what he did to Sihon and Og, the

two kings of the Amorites when, he destroyed them and their people. **5** Yahweh will enable you to conquer those people groups, but you must kill all of those people, which is what I have commanded you to do. **6** Be brave and confident. Do not be afraid of those people. Do not forget that it is Yahweh our God who will go with you. He will always help you and never abandon you."

7 Then Moses summoned Joshua, and while all the Israelites were listening, he said to him, "Be brave and confident. You are the one who will lead these people into the land that Yahweh promised to our ancestors that he would give to them, and you will enable them to occupy it. **8** It is Yahweh who will go ahead of you. He will be with you. He will always help you. He will never abandon you. So do not be afraid or dismayed."

9 Moses wrote down all these laws and gave the scroll to the priests, the descendants of Levi, who carried Yahweh's sacred chest. He gave another copy of the laws to all the Israelite elders. **10** Moses told them, "At the end of every seven years, at the time that you must cancel all debts, that is, during the Festival of Shelters, **11** when all the Israelites gather at the place that Yahweh our God chooses for them to worship him, read this law to them all. **12** Gather together everyone—men, women, children, even the foreigners who are living in your towns—in order that they may hear these laws and learn to fear and respect Yahweh our God, and to faithfully obey everything that I have written in these laws. **13** This is so that your descendants, who will not yet know these laws, will hear them and learn to fear and respect Yahweh our God, during all the years that they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to occupy."

14 Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Listen carefully. You will soon die. Summon Joshua, and you will go to the sacred tent with him, in order that I may appoint him to be the new leader." So Joshua and Moses went to the sacred tent.

15 There Yahweh appeared to them in a pillar of cloud, and that cloud was over the entrance to the tent. **16** Yahweh said to Moses, "Listen, you will soon die. Then these people will become unfaithful to me. They will stop obeying the covenant that I made with them. They will begin to worship the foreign gods the people of the land that they will enter are worshiping. **17** When that happens, I will become very angry with them. I will abandon them and refuse to help them any longer. I will cause many bad things to happen to them, and I will

destroy them. Then they will realize that I stopped protecting them. **18** Because of all the evil things that they will have done, and especially because they will have started to worship other gods, I will refuse to help them.

19 So I am going to give you, Moses, a song. Write it on a scroll, teach it to the Israelites, and make them memorize it. It will be like a witness that accuses them. **20** I am about to take them into a very fertile land, a land that I solemnly promised their ancestors that I would give to them. There they will have plenty to eat, with the result that their stomachs will always be full and they will become complacent. But then they will turn to other gods and start to worship them, and they will despise me and break the covenant that I have made with them. **21** When many terrible disasters are happening to them, their descendants will remember this song. It will be like a witness that saw them commit to worship me and accuses them of breaking their promises. I will soon take them into the land that I solemnly promised that I would give to them, but even now, before I do that, I know what they are thinking that they will do when they are living there." **22** So on the day **that Yahweh gave Moses this song,** he wrote it down and taught it to the Israelites.

23 Then Yahweh commanded Joshua, whose father was Nun, "Be brave and confident, because you will lead the Israelites into the land that I solemnly promised that I would give to them. I will be with you."

24 Moses finished writing all the law onto a scroll. **25** Then he told the descendants of Levi, whose job was carrying the sacred chest that contained the agreement with Yahweh, **26** "Take this law scroll and place it beside the sacred chest that contains the agreement with Yahweh our God, in order that it may remain there to testify about what Yahweh will do to the people if they disobey him. **27** I say this because I know that these people are very stubborn. They have rebelled against Yahweh all during the time that I have been with them, and they will rebel much more after I die! **28** So gather all the elders of the tribes and your officials, in order that I can teach them the words of this song, and so that I can request all those who are in heaven and on the earth to be witnesses to testify against these people. **29** I say this because I know that after I die, the people will become very wicked. They will stop doing everything that I have commanded them to do. In the future, because of all the evil things that they will do, they will cause Yahweh to become angry with them. Then he will cause them to experience disasters."

30 Then, while all the Israelites listened, Moses sang the entire song to them **(people will sing this in the future)**:

32 **1** "Listen to me, all you who are in the heavens, let me sing **this song**,
all you who are on the earth, **do the same:** listen to what I sing.
2 I wish that my song may help you like the rain helps you,
may it refresh you like the dew on the ground in the morning,
like a gentle rain on the young plants,
or like showers of rain on the grass.
3 **This song will refresh you if you listen to it** because I will praise Yahweh.
All you people should praise how great our God is.
4 He is like a rock on top of which we are safe;
everything that he does is perfect and completely just.
He always does what he says that he will do, and he never breaks his promises;
he always does the right thing.
5 But you Israelite people have been very unfaithful to him;
because of your sins, you no longer deserve to be his children.
You are extremely wicked and deceitful.
6 You foolish and senseless people,
this is certainly not the way that you should repay Yahweh for all that he has done for you.
He is your father; he created you;
he caused you to become a nation.
7 Think about what happened long ago
by considering what happened to your ancestors.
Ask your parents, and they will inform you;
ask the older people, and they will tell you.
8 Long ago when the Greatest God divided humanity into people groups and gave them their lands,
he set their boundaries according to the number of Jacob's descendants,
9 because Yahweh decided that we would be his people.

He chose us, Jacob's descendants, to belong to him.

10 He saw our ancestors when they were in a desert,
wandering in a land that was desolate.
He protected them and took care of them,
as every person takes good care of his own eyes.

11 Yahweh trained and protected his people just like an eagle encourages its babies to fly
and flutters over them,
spreading its wings and catching them if they start to fall.

12 Yahweh was the only one who led them;
no other foreign god helped them.

13 Yahweh enabled them to rule the hill country;
they ate the crops that grew in the fields.
They found honey in the rocks,
and their olive trees grew even in stony ground.

14 Their cows produced very creamy milk,
the sheep and goats gave them plenty of milk,
they ate choice lamb fat, Bashan-bred rams, and goats,
they had choice wheat kernels,
and they made and drank delicious wine from their grapes.

15 The Israelites became so rich and prosperous that they became very fat,
but then they rebelled against God;
they abandoned him, the one who created them.
They disregarded the God who powerfully saves them.

16 The Israelites made God jealous by worshiping other gods.
Because they did disgusting things while worshiping idols, he became angry.

17 They offered sacrifices to gods who were really demons instead of sacrificing to God,
to gods that they had not known before.
They offered sacrifices to gods that they had recently found out about,
to gods whom your ancestors had never been afraid of.

18 They ignored their Protector who created them,
forgetting the **true** God who made them **a nation**.
19 When Yahweh saw **that they had abandoned him**, he became angry,
so he rejected the Israelites who were like his sons and daughters.
20 He said, ‘They are very wicked people,
very unfaithful,
so I will no longer help them,
and then I will watch and see what happens to them.
21 Because they worship worthless idols that are not real gods,
they have made me angry like a jealous husband.
So I will make them angry in return by using a foolish nation that is not really a people.
22 My anger is like a fierce fire that burns in my nostrils;
it will burn all the way down to the place where dead people are.
That fire will destroy the land and the crops,
it will even burn deep under the mountains.
23 I will cause so many disasters to happen to them
that they will feel like I am shooting all my arrows into them.
24 They will die because of being hungry and because of having hot fevers
and because of terrible diseases.
I will send wild animals to attack them,
and poisonous snakes to bite them.
25 Outside their houses, their enemies will kill them with swords,
and in their homes, their enemies will terrify them.
Their enemies will kill young men and young women,
and they will kill infants and old people with gray hair.
26 I almost completely destroyed them
in order that no one would ever remember them.
27 But I worried that if I did that, their enemies would boast.
They would think the wrong thing.
I did not want them to say, “We are the stronger than the Israelites;

it was us, not Yahweh who destroyed them.”’

28 You are a nation of people who do not have any sense.
None of you are wise.

29 If you were wise, you would understand why I would punish you;
you would have realized what was going to happen to you.

30 You would have realized why one soldier could defeat a thousand soldiers,
and why two soldiers could chase away ten thousand soldiers.
You would realize that this could happen only if the Israelites’ Protector,
Yahweh, had given their enemies power to defeat them.

31 Even our enemies know
that their protector gods are not like our Protector God.

32 Their gods are as deeply evil as those of Sodom and Gomorrah,
so those who worship them are bitter and toxic,

33 they love celebrating things as deadly as snakes’ poison.

34 Yahweh says, ‘The things I will do to punish them, I have kept hidden with me,
protected like a treasure.

35 It is for me to punish and to pay back.
When everything sudden goes wrong
I am starting to destroy them.
I am prepared to punish them quickly.’

36 Yahweh will see that his people are helpless
and that almost no one remains—neither prisoner nor free person.
Then he will pity his servants
and judge on behalf of them.

37 Then Yahweh will ask you, ‘Where are the gods
that you thought would protect you?

38 You gave to those gods the best parts of the animals that you sacrificed,
and you poured out wine for them to drink.
So they should take action to help you;
they should be the ones who will protect you!

39 But now you will realize that I, only I, am God;

there is no other god who is a real god.
I alone can kill people and can cause people to live;
I can wound people, and I alone can heal people,
and there is no one who can prevent me from doing those things.
40 I solemnly swear
that just as surely as I live forever, I will act.
41 I will prepare to judge my enemies
like a warrior sharpens his sword until it shines.
I will strike my enemies back
by repaying those who hate me for what they have done.
42 The arrows **of the army that I send to destroy my enemies** will have so much blood
on them that it would make them drunk if it were wine and they were people.
Their swords will kill a lot of people.
The blood will come from enemies that they kill or that they wound and capture,
some will come from the enemies' leaders' heads.'
43 Everyone joyfully praise Yahweh,
because Yahweh gets revenge on those who kill the people who serve him,
and he cleanses his people's land
which has become defiled because of their sins."

44 Moses and Joshua son of Nun sang that song while the Israelites listened. **45** Then Moses finished telling all the Israelites all Yahweh's instructions. **46** He concluded by telling them, "Never forget all these commands that I have been giving you today. Teach these laws to your children, in order that they will faithfully obey all of them. **47** These instructions are very important. If you obey them, you will live a long time in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to occupy."

48 On that same day, Yahweh said to Moses,

49 "Go to the Abarim mountain range here in the region of Moab, across from the city of Jericho. Climb Mount Nebo and look **toward the west** to see Canaan, the land that I am about to give to the Israelites. **50** You will die on the mountain after you go up. You will join your

people in the place where dead people stay, just like your older brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and went to join your people in the place where dead people stay. 51 You will die because both of you disobeyed me in the presence of the Israelites, when you all were at the springs of Meribah near Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. You did not honor and respect me in the presence of the Israelites in the way that I deserve because I am God. 52 When you are on that mountain where I told you to go, you will see in the distance in front of you the land that I am about to give to the Israelites, but you will not enter it."

33 1 Before God's prophet Moses died, he blessed the Israelites. 2 This is what he said,

"Yahweh came from Mount Sinai,
he came to Israel like the sun rising over Mount Seir,
his light shone from near Mount Paran.
He came with ten thousand holy angels,
and there was a flaming fire at his right side.
3 Yahweh truly loves his people
and protects all his special people.
So they worship him
and listen to his instructions.
4 They said that I gave them laws to obey,
laws that would forever be for the descendants of Jacob.
5 So Yahweh became the king of his precious people
when all the tribes and their leaders had gathered together.

6 I say this about the tribe of Reuben,

I desire that their tribe will never disappear,
but that they will never become numerous.

7 I say this about the tribe of Judah,

Yahweh, listen to them when they call out for help.
When they are fighting a battle,

help them against the enemy,
and bring them back home safely.

8 I say this about the tribe of Levi,

Yahweh's **sacred lots called** Thummim and Urim belong to the tribe that stayed loyal to him
after he tested them at Massah
and where they quarreled with him at Meribah spring.
9 They did what you told them to do
by faithfully keeping the solemn agreement between Yahweh and the Israelites.
Obeying Yahweh was much more important to them
than their parents, siblings, or children.
10 They teach Yahweh's decrees and laws to the Israelites,
they will burn incense for him to enjoy and will completely burn the offerings **that the people bring** on Yahweh's altar.
11 Yahweh, make them prosper
and accept all that they do.
Crush their attackers' ability to have children,
so those that hate them will never be able to fight against them again.

12 I say this about the tribe of Benjamin,

Yahweh loves them;
he keeps them safe.
He protects them continually,
and he lives among their hills.

13 I say this about the tribes of Joseph,

I desire that Yahweh will bless their land
by giving them dew from the sky,
and water from deep in the ground
14 to produce for them wonderful fruit that the sun makes ripe,

wonderful crops in the right months,

15 and wonderful things produced on their ancient hills and mountains.

16 Indeed, may he give them plenty of wonderful things from all that the earth produces

and may **Yahweh who** lived in the **burning** bush be kind to them.

I desire that Yahweh will bless the tribes of Joseph in all those ways,

because he was the leader over his brothers **when they were in Egypt**.

17 There are ten thousand upon ten thousand people in the tribe of Ephraim

and thousands upon thousands of people in the tribe of Manasseh

which will be as strong as a bull;

with their weapons they will wound their enemies like a wild ox gores other animals with its horns.

Together they will push other people groups

to the most distant places on the earth.

18 I say this about the tribes of Zebulun **and Issachar**,

I desire that the people of Zebulun will prosper whenever they go **across the seas**,

and that the people of Issachar will prosper while they stay at home **and take care of their cattle and crops**.

19 They will invite people **from the other Israelite tribe**s to the mountain

where they worship Yahweh by offering correct sacrifices to him.

They will become rich from **the work that they do on** the seas

and from **using** the sand along the sea **to make things**.

20 I say this about the tribe of Gad,

Praise Yahweh, the one who made their territory large.

The people of their tribe will attack their enemies fiercely like a lion that crouches,

waiting to tear off the arm or the scalp of some animal.

21 They chose the best part of the land for themselves;

they got a share big enough for a leader.

When the leaders of the tribes of Israel gathered together,
the tribe of Gad did the righteous things Yahweh commanded Israel to do.

22 I say this about the tribe of Dan,

The people of the tribe of Dan are like a young lion;
they leap out from their caves in the region of Bashan to attack their enemies.

23 I say this about the tribe of Naphtali,

Yahweh has blessed and been very kind to the people of the tribe of Naphtali;
their land extends far south from the Sea of Chenneroth.

24 I say this about the tribe of Asher,

May Yahweh bless the descendants of Asher more than he will bless the other tribes.
I desire that they have a lot of olive trees that will produce a lot of olives to make olive oil.
25 Their towns will have high walls with gates that have bronze and iron bars.
They will be strong as long as they live."

26 **Then Moses said to all the Israelites,** "You Israelites, there is no god like your God,
who travels swiftly through the heavens to rescue you.
27 God, who lives forever, is the one who gives you refuge;
it is as though he puts his everlasting arms under you to support you.
He will drive out your enemies while you advance;
he has told you to destroy all of them.
28 So you Israelite people will live safely;
no one will disturb you descendants of Jacob;
in the land **where you will live**, there will be plenty of grain and wine,
and plenty of dew will fall from the sky.
29 You people of Israel are very fortunate.
There is certainly no nation like your nation,

whom Yahweh has rescued **from being slaves in Egypt**.
He will be like a shield to protect you
and like a powerful sword to enable you to defeat your enemies.
Your enemies will come to you begging for you to act mercifully toward them,
but you will thoroughly overcome them."

34 **1** Then Moses climbed up from the plains in the region of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the highest point on Mount Pisgah, which is across **the Jordan River** from Jericho. **There** Yahweh showed him all the **land that the Israelites would occupy. He showed him the region of** Gilead as far north as the city of Dan; **2** all the land that the tribes of Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Judah would occupy as far the sea to the west, **3** the desert area in the south part of Judah, and the plain in the valley with Jericho (which is called the City of Palms), from there **on the north end of the Salt Sea** to the city of Zoar **on the south end**. **4** Then Yahweh said to him, "This is the land that I solemnly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give to their descendants. I have allowed you to see it clearly from a distance, but you will not go there."

5 So Moses, who always served Yahweh faithfully, died there in the land of Moab, which is what Yahweh said would happen. **6** Yahweh buried Moses' body in the valley in the land of Moab, across from the town of Beth Peor, but until now, no one knows where Yahweh buried him. **7** Moses was 120 years old when he died, but he was still very strong, and he could still see very well. **8** The Israelites mourned for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days and then they stopped crying for him.

9 Because Moses had put his hands on Joshua the son of Nun **to appoint him to be the Israelites' new leader**, God gave Joshua a spirit that made him very wise. The Israelites obeyed Joshua, and they obeyed all that Yahweh had commanded them through Moses.

10 Since the time that Moses lived, there has never been a prophet in Israel like him, for Yahweh spoke with him personally. **11** No other prophet has performed all the kinds of powerful miracles that Yahweh caused him to do against Pharaoh, king of Egypt, against all his servants, and against the people of Egypt. **12** No other prophet has been able to perform all the great and terrifying deeds that all the Israelites saw Moses perform.

Joshua

1 **1** After Moses the servant of Yahweh died, Yahweh spoke to Joshua son of Nun. He had been Moses' helper. Yahweh said, **2** "**You know that** my servant Moses has died. So now get ready to cross over the Jordan River, you and all these people. Enter the land that I will soon give to all of you Israelites. **3** I will certainly give you every place where you walk in that land, just as I promised Moses. **4** That land will extend from the wilderness **in the south** to the Lebanon mountains **in the northwest**, to the Euphrates River **in the northeast**, and to the Great Sea **in the west** where the sun goes down. It will include all the land where the Hittites live. **5** No people group will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will help you as I helped Moses. I promise that I will not abandon you and I will never leave you.

6 Be strong and brave, because you are the one who will lead these people so that they can possess this land that I promised to give to their ancestors. **7** Just be strong and very brave so that you can be sure to obey all the laws that my servant Moses gave to you. **Obey those laws** so that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not stop obeying any of them. **8** Make sure to read continually the laws that God gave Moses. Constantly think about those laws so that you will carefully obey each one. If you do that, then you will be successful in the things you do. **9** Do not forget that I have commanded you to be strong and brave. Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged, because I, Yahweh your God, will be with you wherever you go."

10 So Joshua commanded the leaders of the people of Israel, **11** "Go throughout the camp and give these orders to the people: 'Prepare all the food that you will take with you, because the day after tomorrow we will cross the Jordan River. We are going across in order to conquer the land that Yahweh, our God, has promised to give us.'"

12 Then Joshua spoke to the people of the tribes that were the descendants of Reuben and Gad. He also spoke to the people of half of the tribe of Manasseh. **All those people were going to settle on the east side of the Jordan River.** Joshua said, **13** "Keep in mind the orders that Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you. Moses said, 'Yahweh your God will give you this land so that

you can live here peacefully.’ **14** Your wives, your little children, and your cows, sheep, and goats may stay here in this land that Moses gave you on the east side of the Jordan River. But all the men of fighting age, **twenty years old or older,** must cross the Jordan River. They must go ahead of the people of the other tribes. Your soldiers must take all their weapons so that they can help their fellow Israelites. **15** You must help your fellow Israelites to fight against the inhabitants of the land until Yahweh has enabled them to defeat the inhabitants and settle in the land permanently and live peacefully there. That is what Yahweh has done for you in the land he has given you. Yahweh our God will do the same thing for them. After you help them, then your soldiers may return to live in this land that Yahweh’s servant Moses gave to you here on the east side of the Jordan River.”

16 The people answered Joshua, “We will do everything you have told us to do, and we will go wherever you tell us to go. **17** As we obeyed all that Moses told us to do, so we will obey all that you tell us to do. We pray that Yahweh your God will help you just as he helped Moses. **18** We will execute anyone who refuses to obey what you say and does not do everything that you command. But **we want you, Joshua**, to be strong and brave!”

2 **1** Then Joshua son of Nun chose two men from their camp at Shittim. He told them, “Go secretly and find out all that you can about the land, especially about the city of Jericho.” They left the camp and went to Jericho. A prostitute whose name was Rahab lived in that city. They stayed in her house that night. **2** Someone told the king of Jericho, “Be careful! Some Israelite men have come here tonight to spy on our land!” **3** So the king of Jericho sent messengers to Rahab. They told her, “We know that some men are staying in your house. Surrender them to the king, because they have come here to spy on our land!” **4** But Rahab had already hidden the two men **inside her house**. She told the messengers, “Yes, it is true that those men came to me. But I did not know that they were spies. **5** Those men left Jericho at dusk, before the guards closed the city gates. I do not know where they were going. But if you hurry, you might catch up with them.” **6** **But she was lying.** She had actually taken the two men up to the **flat** roof of her house. There she had hidden them under bundles of flax that she had laid out **to dry** on her roof. **7** Soldiers looked for the men all along the road that leads from Jericho to the place where people can walk across the Jordan River. **They thought the men would travel on that road**

back to the Israelite camp. As soon as the soldiers left the city, guards shut the city gates **to keep the spies from escaping if they were actually still in the city**.

8 The two men expected to sleep on the roof, hiding under the flax stalks. But Rahab went up to the roof and spoke with them before they went to sleep. **9** She said to them, "We know that Yahweh is going to enable you Israelites to conquer this land. As a result, all the people living in this land are so afraid of you that we will not be able to fight with you. **10** We have heard about how Yahweh dried up the water of the Sea of Reeds so that you could cross it when you left Egypt. We also heard how you killed Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorite people group who lived on the eastern side of the Jordan River. We heard how you totally destroyed them. **11** When we heard about those things, we were very dismayed. Because of the way your God has helped you, we no longer feel courageous enough to fight against you. **We know that** Yahweh, whom you worship, is the true God. He is the God who rules over everything. **And if he is helping you, then we cannot resist you.** **12** So now I want you to swear a solemn oath to me by Yahweh that you will act kindly to me and my family because I have acted kindly toward you. I also want you to give me some proof that you will do what you promise, **13** Spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all of their families. Promise me that you Israelites will not kill us **when you destroy this city**." **14** The two men told her, "May Yahweh cause us to die if we let anyone kill you or your family! If you do not tell others what we are planning to do, then we will act kindly toward you and all your family. We will not kill you when Yahweh enables us to conquer this land." **15** **One of** the outside walls of the house where Rahab lived was part of the wall that was around the city of Jericho. She fastened a rope and hung it outside a window that was in that wall. That allowed the men to climb down the wall **and escape from the city, even though the king's men had closed the gates**. **16** Then she said to them, "When you leave the city, go up into the hills so that the men who are searching for you will not find you. Hide in caves in the hills for three days, until the men who are searching for you return to the city. Then you will be able to safely return to your camp." **17** The two men **gave her a red cord, and** said to her, "This is what you must do. If you do not do this, we will not have to do what you made us promise to do. **18** When we come into the land, you must tie this red cord in the window through which you let us down. You must gather together your father and mother, your brothers and sisters, and their families inside your house. **19** If anyone in your family leaves the house and goes into the street, **our soldiers** will kill them, and we will not be guilty. But if they injure anyone who is in this house with

you, we will be guilty. **20** But if you tell anyone what we are planning to do, we will not have to do what you made us promise to do." **21** Rahab said, "I agree to do what you say." Then she sent them away, and they left her house. And she tied the red cord so it would hang out of the window. **22** When the two men left the city, they went up into the hills. They stayed there for three days while the men who had been sent by the king continued to search for them. They searched all along the road, but they did not find the two men. **So they gave up and returned to Jericho.** **23** Then the two men started back toward their camp. They came down from the hills, crossed the Jordan River, and returned to the Israelite camp. They told Joshua everything that had happened to them. **24** They said to Joshua, "We are certain that Yahweh is going to enable us to conquer that whole land. We know that because all the people there are very afraid of us."

3 **1** Joshua **and all the other Israelites** got up early the next morning. They left their camp at Shittim and went down to the Jordan River. They camped there before they crossed over the river. **2** They rested for one day, and the morning after that, the leaders of the people went throughout the camp. **3** They instructed the people, "When you see some of the priests, who are the descendants of Levi, carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh your God, then **you will know** it is time to leave this place and follow the sacred chest. **4** Since you have not gone this way before, you do not know where you should go. So you **must follow the priests so that you** will know the direction that you should travel, but stay at least 1,000 yards away from the sacred chest. Do not come closer than that."

5 Then Joshua told the Israelites, "Perform the ceremonies that will make yourselves acceptable to Yahweh, because tomorrow he is going to do things for you that will amaze you!"

6 Then Joshua said to the priests, "Carry the sacred chest and go in front of the people." So they lifted up the sacred chest and went in front of the people.

7 Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "This is the day when I will begin to cause all the people of Israel to honor you greatly as their leader. They will understand that I am helping you just as I helped Moses. **8** Tell the priests who are carrying the sacred chest, 'When you come to the edge of the Jordan River, stand still in the water.'" **9** Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come close to me and listen to what Yahweh, your God, will tell you." **10** **When they came**

near, Joshua said, “This is how you will know that God, who lives and can do anything, acts on your behalf. You will certainly see him expel from the land the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. 11 Know with certainty that Yahweh is the one who rules over all the earth. The sacred chest belongs to him, and the priests will carry it into the Jordan River ahead of you. 12 So choose 12 men, one from each of the tribes of Israel. 13 When the priests who are carrying the chest of Yahweh, who rules over all the earth, put their feet in the waters of the Jordan River, the water will stop flowing. The water coming from upstream will pile up because Yahweh will cause them to be blocked.”

14 So the Israelites packed up their tents so that they could go across the Jordan River. The priests who were carrying the sacred chest went in front of the people. 15 It was springtime, when people harvest their crops, and at that time the Jordan River floods over all its banks. But the moment the priests who carried the sacred chest reached the edge of the river and stepped into the water, 16 the water stopped flowing. The water piled up far upstream, at a town named Adam, near the city named Zarethan. The water stopped flowing down to the Sea of Arabah, which people also call the Sea of Salt. The water completely stopped flowing, and the people were able to cross the river near Jericho. 17 The priests who were carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan riverbed. They continued to stand there until all the people of Israel had crossed the river on dry ground.

4 1 After all the people of Israel had finished crossing the Jordan River, Yahweh said to Joshua, 2 “Choose 12 men, one from each tribe of Israel. 3 Tell them to pick up 12 stones from the middle of the dry Jordan riverbed where the priests are standing. Tell them to carry those stones and put them down at the place you will stay tonight.”

4 So Joshua chose 12 men, one from each tribe of Israel. Then Joshua called them together 5 and said to them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan riverbed, in front of the priests who are standing and holding the sacred chest of Yahweh your God. Each of you must pick up a large stone, one for each tribe. Each of you is to carry a stone on his shoulder. That will be a total of 12 stones for the 12 tribes of the people of Israel. 6 These stones will be a monument for you to see. In the future, your children will ask, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 7 Tell them that these stones are here because Yahweh blocked the water in the Jordan River so that it stopped flowing when the priests were carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh. When the chest was carried

into the Jordan River, Yahweh blocked the water so that we were able to cross the Jordan on dry ground. These stones will cause our descendants to remember forever what Yahweh has done."

8 So those 12 men did exactly what Joshua had told them to do. They went and picked up 12 large stones from the middle of the Jordan riverbed, one stone for each of the tribes of Israel. That was what Yahweh had told Joshua. Then they carried the stones to their camp. They put the stones down there. **9** Then Joshua took 12 other large stones and stacked them in a pile in the middle of the Jordan riverbed where the priests who carried the sacred chest were standing. And those stones are still there.

10 The priests who carried the chest remained standing in the middle of the Jordan riverbed until the Israelites had finished doing everything that Yahweh had commanded Joshua to tell them to do. These were the same instructions that Moses had given to Joshua. The Israelites crossed the riverbed quickly. **11** As soon as all the people had crossed over, then the priests carried the sacred chest of Yahweh across the river. The people watched them do that. **12** The soldiers from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, crossed over ahead of the rest of the Israelite people. They brought their weapons with them. That was what Moses had ordered them to do. **13** As Yahweh was watching, about 40,000 soldiers crossed the riverbed. These men were ready fight in the Israelite army. They were heading for the plains of Jericho, where they would fight a battle. **14** On that day, Yahweh caused all the people of Israel to honor Joshua greatly as their leader. And they deeply respected Joshua his entire life, just as they had deeply respected Moses. **15** Yahweh said to Joshua, **16** "Order the priests who are carrying the sacred chest of the testimony to come up from the Jordan riverbed." **17** So Joshua commanded the priests to come up from the Jordan riverbed. **18** Then the priests, carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh, came up out of the Jordan riverbed. As soon as the priests walked up out of the riverbed onto the riverbank, the water of the Jordan River started flowing again, and the river overflowed its banks as it had been doing before.

19 It was on the tenth day of the first month of their year that the Israelite people crossed over the Jordan riverbed and camped at a place called Gilgal. That is east of the land near the city of Jericho. **20** At Gilgal, Joshua set up the 12 large stones that the 12 men had carried from the Jordan riverbed. **21** Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, "In the future, when your descendants ask, 'Why are these stones here?' **22** tell them, 'This is where we Israelites

crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.' 23 While you were watching, Yahweh, the God you worship, dried up the river for you, until we had all crossed it. Yahweh, the God we worship, did to the Jordan River exactly what he did to the Sea of Reeds. He caused that to become dry, as our parents were watching, until they all crossed it. 24 Yahweh did that in order that all the peoples of the earth would know that he is very powerful. And because you have seen this, as a result, you will always revere Yahweh your God."

5 1 The leaders of the Amorites and Canaanites heard about how Yahweh had dried up the water of the Jordan River in front of the Israelites so that they could cross it. Those leaders included all the kings of the Amorites who lived on the west side of the Jordan River, toward the Great Sea. They also included all the kings of the Canaanites, who lived close to the Great Sea. When those kings heard what Yahweh had done, they became very afraid and no longer desired to fight the Israelites.

2 While the Israelites were staying at Gilgal, Yahweh said to Joshua, "Someone had circumcised the Israelite males who lived in Egypt before they left there. Now make knives from flint stones and circumcise all the Israelite males whom no one has yet circumcised." 3 So Joshua commanded the people to make knives from flint stones and circumcise the Israelite males at a place that people now call Circumcision Hill. 4 This is why they circumcised the Israelite males at this time. All of the men who left Egypt, all those old enough to be soldiers, had died in the desert after they left Egypt. 5 Someone had circumcised those men when they were children in Egypt. But no one had circumcised the boys whose mothers gave birth to them while they were in the wilderness, after they left Egypt. 6 The people of Israel traveled through the wilderness for 40 years, until all the men who were old enough to be soldiers, who had left Egypt, had died. This happened because they had not obeyed Yahweh. So Yahweh swore to them that they would not be able to enter the land that he had promised to our ancestors. He said that he would give that very fertile land to us, their descendants. 7 The sons of those who had disobeyed Yahweh were the ones whom Joshua and other Israelite leaders circumcised at Gilgal. They circumcised them there because no one had done that while they were traveling in the wilderness. 8 After the leaders had circumcised all the Israelite males, they remained in the camp and rested until they had healed. 9 Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "People thought badly of you because they considered you to be just former Egyptian slaves.

But now I have made you a distinct nation." Because of that, people called that place Gilgal, and it still has that name even now.

10 On the evening of the fourteenth day of that month, while the people of Israel were staying at Gilgal, on the plain near the city of Jericho, they celebrated the Passover festival. **11** The day after they celebrated the Passover festival, they gathered barley grain in that area. They made some of the barley grain into unleavened bread and ate, and they roasted and ate some of it. **12** The next day, Yahweh stopped sending manna for the people of Israel to eat. From then on, they ate food that grew in the land of Canaan.

13 One day, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw someone who appeared to be a man standing in front of him. The man was holding a sword in his hand. Joshua approached him and asked him, "Are you going to fight for us or against us?" **14** The man replied, "I am not a soldier in any human army. Rather, I am the commander of Yahweh's army. I have come here to help you." Then Joshua very respectfully got down on his knees and touched his face to the ground. Joshua said to him, "What do you want me to do? I will do it." **15** The commander of Yahweh's army replied, "The ground on which you are standing is holy because I am here. So take off your sandals." So Joshua took off his sandals.

6 **1** Because the people of Jericho were afraid of the army of Israel, the guards of Jericho tightly shut the city gates. No one was allowed to enter the city or leave it. **2** Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Pay attention to what I am about to tell you! I am going to enable your army to conquer the city of Jericho and its king and its soldiers. **3** You and your army must march around the city once a day for six days. **4** Tell seven priests to march around with you and the army. Each of the priests must carry a ram's horn that they can blow as they march ahead of the sacred chest of Yahweh. On the seventh day, you and the army and the seven priests must march around the city seven times, and the priests must be blowing the horns while they march. **5** After they have all marched around the city seven times, then the priests must blow their horns very loudly. When you and the Israelite soldiers hear that, you must all shout very loudly. Then the city wall will collapse onto itself, and all the Israelite soldiers will go straight into the city."

6 So Joshua summoned the priests and said to them, “Tell four priests to carry Yahweh’s
sacred chest, and tell seven other priests to carry horns and walk ahead of the sacred chest of
Yahweh.” **7** And he told the Israelite soldiers and priests, “Start marching. March around the
city with some soldiers with weapons marching in front. Behind them will march the seven
priests with horns, and behind them will march the four priests carrying Yahweh’s sacred
chest.”

8 After Joshua told them that, the seven priests, each one carrying a horn, began marching
ahead of Yahweh’s sacred chest while blowing their horns. The four priests who were carrying
Yahweh’s sacred chest followed them. **9** The group of soldiers carrying their weapons marched
in front of the priests who were blowing on their horns. The rest of the soldiers followed the
sacred chest. While they were all marching, the priests kept blowing their horns. **10** But all the
Israelites, except the priests who were blowing their horns, were silent, because Joshua had
commanded them to say nothing. He had told them, “Do not make a war cry. Do not yell or say
even one word until the seventh day when we have walked around the city and I tell you to
shout. On that day, you must shout!” **11** So the men carrying Yahweh’s sacred chest and all the
others did what Joshua told them to do. They marched around the city one time. Then they all
returned to their camp and stayed there that night.

12 The next morning, Joshua and the soldiers and priests got up early and the four priests
again carried Yahweh’s sacred chest. **13** The seven priests who were carrying horns went in
front of the four priests who were carrying Yahweh’s sacred chest. The seven priests were
continually walking ahead of the sacred chest and making loud blasts with their horns as they
marched. The armed soldiers walked in front of them and the rest of the soldiers followed the
sacred chest of Yahweh. All this time, the seven priests kept blowing their horns. **14** So on the
second day, they again marched around the city one time and then returned to their camp. They
did the same thing for six days.

15 On the seventh day, they got up as soon as the sun rose, and they all marched around the
city as they had done the previous six days. But this time they marched around the city seven
times. **16** As they were marching around the city the seventh time, when the priests were
blowing the long blasts on their horns, Joshua commanded the Israelite soldiers, “Shout,
because Yahweh is about to enable you to capture this city! **17** Yahweh has declared that you
must destroy the city and everything in it to show that it belongs to him. You must only spare

Rahab the prostitute and all the people who are in her house with her, because she hid the spies we sent to Jericho. **18** But be very careful of this: Yahweh has declared that we must destroy the people, animals, and things in the city. So you certainly must not take any of the things in the city. If you take anything, you will cause Yahweh to destroy our people and cause terrible things to happen to us. **19** All the silver and gold and all the iron and bronze articles that you find, you must set apart for Yahweh. You must put those things in his treasury."

20 So they obeyed Joshua. When the Israelite army heard the priests begin blowing a long blast on their horns, then they shouted loudly, and the wall of the city collapsed! Then the Israelite army went up into the city. Each soldier went straight into the city from wherever he was standing when the wall fell. In that way, the Israelite army captured the city. **21** They killed every living thing in Jericho. They killed all the men, women, boys, and girls. They also killed all the cattle and sheep and donkeys.

22 Then Joshua said to the two men who had spied on the land, "Go to the house of that prostitute woman who helped you. Bring her out, along with all her family, just as you promised her you would do." **23** So, the young men who had spied on the land went and brought Rahab out of her house. They brought out her father, mother, brothers, and all her relatives who were with her. They brought them to a place outside the camp of Israel's army. **24** Then the Israelite soldiers burned the city, along with everything in it. But they saved the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron and put them into the treasury of things for the tent of meeting. **25** But Joshua allowed Rahab the prostitute to live, along with her father's household and everyone who was with her. He did that because she hid the spies that Joshua sent to spy on Jericho. She has lived among the people of Israel until this time.

26 After Joshua and his soldiers had destroyed the city of Jericho, he made each of the Israelites swear that they would not rebuild the city. He said, "Yahweh will curse anyone who rebuilds this city, Jericho. When that person lays its foundation, Yahweh will cause his oldest son to die. When he finishes building the city wall and sets up its gates, Yahweh will cause his youngest son to die." All the people agreed that this should be the punishment for anyone who rebuilt the city.

27 Yahweh helped Joshua, and as a result, he became famous throughout the whole land of Canaan.

7 **1** **Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to show that all the things they found in Jericho belonged to him. To do that, the Israelites were to destroy them or put them in his treasury.** But there was a man from the tribe of Judah whose name was Achan. He was the son of Karmi, the grandson of Zabdi, and the great-grandson of Zerah. He disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded the Israelites. He took for himself some of the things Yahweh had said belonged only to him. Therefore, Yahweh became very angry with the Israelites.

2 Now Joshua told some of his men to go from the city of Jericho to the town of Ai. That town was east of the city of Bethel and near the town of Beth Aven. Joshua said to them, "Go to Ai and see what we need to do to conquer it." So the men went and did what Joshua had instructed them to do.

3 When they returned, they told him, "Only a small number of people live in Ai. So just send 2,000 or 3,000 men to attack them. There is no need to send all of our soldiers." **4** So about 3,000 Israelite men went to attack Ai. But the men of Ai defeated the men of Israel so badly that the men of Israel ran away. **5** The soldiers of Ai killed about 36 Israelite soldiers. They chased the rest of them from the city gate to the stone quarries. They even killed Israelite soldiers on the slopes **that led back down to the Jordan River**. When the Israelite people saw this, they became very afraid. They no longer had the courage to fight.

6 Joshua and the leaders of Israel tore their clothes **to show that they were very sad that their enemies had defeated them**. They lay down on the ground in front of the sacred chest of Yahweh, and they stayed there until evening time. They also put dirt on their heads **to show that they were very sad about what had happened**. **7** Then Joshua prayed and said, "Lord Yahweh, you brought us Israelites safely across the Jordan River. So I do not understand why you are now allowing the Amorites to destroy us. I really wish that we had stayed on the other side of the Jordan River! Then we would not be in this situation. **8** O Lord, I do not know what to say, now that we Israelites have run away from our enemies. **9** The Canaanites and all the other people who are living in this land will hear **that the army of the city of Ai defeated us**. Then they will surround us and kill us all! Then people will no longer think that you are a great and powerful God!"

10 But Yahweh said to Joshua, “Stand up! Stop lying there with your face in the dirt!
11 The people of Israel have sinned. They have disobeyed the commands that I instructed them to obey. They have taken from the things that I said they must devote to me. They have stolen and been deceptive and put what they have stolen in with their own possessions. **12** That is why the Israelite soldiers could not defeat the soldiers of Ai. That is why they ran away from them. And now Israelites you have become something that someone should destroy. Unless you do as I commanded you and destroy the things you took from Jericho that you were supposed to devote to me, then I will not help you anymore!

13 Now go and tell the people of Israel that they must prepare themselves for what will happen tomorrow. They must perform the rituals that will cause them to become acceptable to me **again**. Tell them that I said that one of you has kept some of the things that I told you to devote to me. Tell them that I said you will not be able to defeat your enemies until you get rid of those things.

14 Tomorrow morning you must present yourselves before me, tribe by tribe. Then I will indicate to you which tribe **the guilty person belongs to**. Then I will indicate to you which clan **from that tribe the guilty person belongs to**. Then I will indicate to you which family he belongs to, and then I will indicate which man **in that family took the things I said you must devote to me**.
15 Then you must **kill and** burn **the body of** the person who has taken some of the things that you should have given to me. You must burn him and his family and everything he owns, because he has disobeyed the agreement that I, Yahweh made with you Israelites, and because he has done a disgraceful act among the people of Israel.”

16 Early the next morning, Joshua instructed all the Israelite people to come near **to the sacred tent**, tribe by tribe. **When they did that,** Yahweh indicated that a person from the tribe of Judah **was the one who had taken the things that the Israelites should have given him**. **17** Then the clans of Judah presented themselves, and Yahweh indicated that someone from the clan of Zerah **was the guilty person**. Then the families of Zerah’s clan presented themselves, and Yahweh indicated that someone from the family of Zabdi **was the guilty person**. **18** Then Joshua told the men from the family of Zabdi to present themselves. **When they did that,** Yahweh indicated that Achan was the guilty man. He was the son of Carmi, the grandson of Zabdi, the great-grandson of Zerah, and the great-great-grandson of Judah.

19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “Young man, honor Yahweh, the God we Israelites worship,
by telling the truth and confessing it before him. Now tell me what you did, and do not try to
conceal it from me.”

20 Achan replied, “It is true. I have sinned against Yahweh, the God we Israelites worship.
This is what I did: 21 I saw among the plunder from Jericho a beautiful coat from Babylon. I
also saw 200 pieces of silver and a piece of gold that weighed the equivalent of 50 pieces of
silver. I wanted those things very much, so I took them. I buried them in the ground under my
tent. You will find them there. The silver pieces are buried under the other things.”

22 So Joshua sent some men to find the things that Achan had stolen from Yahweh. They ran
to Achan’s tent and found all the things he had hidden there. 23 The men took the things Achan
had stolen out of his tent and brought them to Joshua and to the Israelites. Then they spread
them out on the ground in front of the sacred tent as evidence that Achan was guilty of stealing
from the plunder, as Yahweh had said an Israelite had done.

24 Then Joshua and the Israelites brought Achan son of Zerah up to a place that people
later called the Valley of Achor. They brought the things he had stolen from Yahweh, and they
also brought his sons and daughters and his wife and his cattle and donkeys and sheep and
goats. They also brought his tent and everything else that belonged to him. 25 Joshua said,
“You have troubled us Israelites greatly, so today Yahweh will trouble you.” Then all the
people of Israel threw stones at Achan and his family until they died. Then they burned them
and all their possessions with fire.

26 They piled rocks over the ashes of their corpses, and those rocks are still there now.
After that, Yahweh was no longer angry with the Israelites. That is why the Israelites named
that place the Valley of Achor. People still call it by that name now.

8 1 Then Yahweh said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of what
happened last time you fought against the men of Ai. Take with you all the soldiers you have and
go up to Ai again. I will certainly enable you to defeat the king of Ai and his people, and I will
give you his city and his land. 2 Your army must do to the city of Ai and its people and king
the same thing that you did to the city of Jericho and its people and king. But this time I will

allow you to take all their possessions and keep them for yourselves. Tell some of your soldiers to hide behind the city and prepare to attack it suddenly."

3 So Joshua led all his army toward the city of Ai. He chose 30,000 of his best soldiers and prepared them to go out during the night. **4** Joshua said to them, "Listen carefully! Some of you must hide on the other side of Ai. Do not go very far from the city. Each one of you must be ready **to attack it**. **5** I and the soldiers who are with me will march toward the city **in the morning**. Then the soldiers who are in the city will come out to fight us, as they did before. We will turn around and start to run away from them. **6** Because they will think that we are running away from them as we did before, they will leave the city and chase after us. While we are running away from them, **7** those of you who are hiding must come out and enter the city and capture it. Yahweh, your God, will enable you to conquer the city. **8** After you capture the city, burn it. Do what Yahweh has commanded us to do. Those are the orders I am giving to you."

9 Then Joshua sent some of the Israelite soldiers to hide and wait at a place between Bethel and Ai. That place was on the west side of Ai. But Joshua slept that night among his other soldiers.

10 Early the next morning, Joshua gathered his soldiers together. Then he and the other Israelite leaders went in front of them to Ai. **11** They all set up their tents close to Ai, just to the north of the city, where all the people of the city could see them. There was a valley between them and the city of Ai. **12** Joshua chose about 5,000 of his soldiers and told them to go and hide just west of Ai, between Ai and Bethel. **13** So that was how Joshua and the elders **prepared for the battle. They** stationed the main group of Israelite soldiers north of Ai and they stationed the other group on the west side of Ai. That night Joshua went down into the valley.

14 When the king of Ai saw **the Israelite army**, he and all his soldiers got up early **the next morning** and quickly went out of the city to fight them at a place where they had agreed to meet. That place was near the Jordan River valley. But the king of Ai did not know that some of the Israelite soldiers were hiding behind the city, ready to attack it. **15** Joshua and all the Israelite soldiers **who were with him** allowed the army of Ai to push them back. They retreated toward the wilderness. **16** Then the king of Ai ordered all the men in the city to chase after

Joshua and his men. So they left the city and pursued them. **17** All the men of Ai and also the men from the city of Bethel pursued the Israelite army. They did not leave a guard behind to defend their cities. They even left the city gates wide open as they went to pursue the soldiers of Israel.

18 Then Yahweh said to Joshua, “Lift up your curved sword and point it toward Ai, because I am going to enable your soldiers to capture it!” So Joshua pointed his curved sword toward Ai. **19** When the Israelite men who were hiding saw Joshua do that, they rushed out from the places where they were hiding and ran into the city. They captured it and quickly set it on fire.

20 When the men of Ai looked back, they saw smoke rising from their city up to the sky. They could not escape in any direction, because the Israelite soldiers stopped running away towards the wilderness and turned back toward them. **21** Joshua and all the Israelite soldiers knew that the men who had been hiding had captured the city and were burning it because they saw the smoke rising. So they turned around and began killing the men of Ai. **22** Meanwhile, the soldiers who had captured the city came out and attacked them from the rear. So the men of Ai were caught in the middle of the two groups of Israelite soldiers. The Israelites fought against the men of Ai until they killed them all. None of the men of Ai escaped. **23** But the king of Ai was still alive. They captured him and brought him to Joshua.

24 The Israelite soldiers killed all the men of Ai who had come out into the fields that were in the open country to pursue them. When they had killed every one of them, then all the Israelite soldiers went back to Ai and killed everyone who was there. **25** The Israelites killed 12,000 men and women that day. They killed everyone who lived in Ai. **26** Joshua continued to point his curved sword toward Ai until the Israelites had killed all the people who lived in Ai. **27** The Israelite soldiers took for themselves the animals and the other things that had belonged to the people of Ai, just as Yahweh had told Joshua that they should do.

28 Joshua and his soldiers burned Ai and caused it to become a pile of ruins that no one ever rebuilt. It is still an abandoned place now. **29** Joshua hanged the king of Ai on a tree. He left his corpse hanging there until evening. At sunset, Joshua told his men to take the king’s body down from the tree and throw it on the ground at the entrance of the city gate. After they

did that, they piled a great mound of rocks on top of the king's corpse. That pile of rocks is still there now.

30 Then Joshua instructed his men to build on Ebal Mountain an altar for Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship. **31** They built it just as Moses, Yahweh's servant, had written previously in the book of instructions that Yahweh had given to him. They made the altar from stones that no one had cut. No one had done any work on these stones using iron tools. The Israelites then offered on the altar sacrifices to Yahweh that were burned completely, and they also made fellowship sacrifices. **32** At that place, Joshua wrote on the stones of the altar a copy of the instructions that Yahweh had previously given to Moses. The Israelites watched Joshua do this. **33** The leaders, officials, and judges of Israel and all the other Israelites were standing on both sides of the sacred chest. They were all standing facing the Levitical priests who carried the sacred chest of Yahweh. Both native-born Israelites and foreigners who were living among the Israelites were there. Half of the people stood on one side of the valley below Gerizim Mountain, and the other half of the people stood on the other side of the valley below Ebal Mountain. The sacred chest was in the valley between the two groups. This is what Moses, Yahweh's servant, had previously instructed them to do when he had given instructions for blessing the people of Israel.

34 Then Joshua read to the people everything that Moses had written. That included the things Yahweh had instructed them to do and not to do. That also included Yahweh's teachings and the ways that he said he would bless them if they obeyed his commands or curse them if they disobeyed his commands. **35** Joshua made sure to read every word that Moses had commanded them. He read every word in front of the entire assembly of Israelites. All the women and children were there as well, and also the foreigners who were living among the people of Israel.

9 **1** All the kings on the west side of the Jordan River heard about what the Israelites had done at Ai. These kings lived in the hilly region, in the western foothills, and along all the coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon. They were the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Once these kings heard about what Israel had done to Ai, **2** they all agreed to gather their armies together to fight against Joshua and the Israelite army.

3 However, when the people who lived in the city of Gibeon heard that Joshua's army had killed all the people of Jericho and Ai, 4 they **decided to act differently toward the Israelites than the other kings had. The Gibeonites** decided to trick **the Israelites**. They sent some of their men to be ambassadors **for their people**. These men gathered old packs and old leather wine bags that people had mended after they had cracked. Then they put these on the backs of their donkeys. 5 They put on old sandals that people had patched, and they wore old, ragged clothes. They took along bread that was hard and had become crumbled. 6 They went to where Joshua and the other Israelites had set up their tents at Gilgal. They said to Joshua and the Israelite leaders, "We have traveled from a land that is far away. We want you to make a treaty with us."

7 The Israelite leaders said to these Hivite men, "You might actually live close by us. If you do, we certainly cannot make a treaty with you**, because if we did, then we would be disobeying Yahweh's command to dispossess all the people-groups who live near us**!"

8 But they replied to Joshua, "We are willing to become your subjects."

But Joshua answered, "What people-group do you belong to, and from what place did you come from?"

9 The men from Gibeon answered him, "We have come here from a faraway country because Yahweh your God has become famous. People have told us about all the **miraculous** things he did **for you** in Egypt. 10 We have also heard that he helped you defeat the two Amorite kings who were on the east side of the Jordan River. These kings were Sihon, who ruled in the city of Heshbon, and Og, who ruled in the city of Ashtaroth in the region of Bashan. 11 So our leaders and the rest of our people said to us, 'Take some food with you and go to talk with the Israelites. Tell them, "We are willing to become your subjects. So make a peace agreement with us."' 12 When we left our homes to come to you, we packed this bread fresh from the oven. But see how it is now dry and has become hard and crumbled. 13 And **when we left our homes to come to you**, these leather wine bags were new. But look at them now! They are old and cracked. Our clothes have become ragged and our sandals have become worn because of our long journey here."

14 The Israelite leaders looked at the food that the men from Gibeon had brought with
them to see if it was old as they claimed. But the Israelite leaders did not ask Yahweh what they
should do. 15 Then Joshua agreed to make a treaty with the men from Gibeon. He promised
that the Israelites would not kill the Gibeonites. The Israelite leaders made the same promise to
the men from Gibeon.

16 A whole day went by after Joshua and the Israelite leaders made this treaty with the
men from Gibeon. On the day after that, the Israelites learned that they actually lived close by
them. 17 So they travelled to see where the Gibeonites lived. They left Gilgal on one day,
traveled for another whole day, and on the day after that arrived at the city of Gibeon and the
surrounding towns of Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim. 18 But the Israelites still did not
kill the Gibeonites even after seeing that they lived nearby. That was because their leaders had
made a solemn vow by Yahweh their God promising them that they would not kill them.

All the people of Israel grumbled against their leaders for making this treaty. 19 But all the
leaders replied, "We made a solemn vow by Yahweh our God promising them that we would
not kill them. So now we may not kill them. 20 What we must do to the Gibeonites is let them
live. If we kill them, God will be angry with us and punish us because we did not keep our
promise to them." 21 Then the leaders announced this decision to all of the Israelites: "We
must allow them to live." But they also told the Israelites that they could make the Gibeonites
slaves who would cut wood and get water for all of them. So the Israelites obeyed the
instructions of their leaders.

22 Joshua summoned the men from Gibeon and said to them, "Tell me why you lied to us
by saying that you live very far from here, when in fact you actually live nearby! 23 Because
you did that, Yahweh has cursed you. You will always be our slaves. We will make you cut
wood and carry water for the place where we worship our God."

24 The Gibeonites answered, "We lied to you because we were very afraid that you would
kill us. We had heard that your God Yahweh instructed his servant Moses to give you all this
land and kill everyone who lives in it. 25 So now, you have control over us. Do to us what you
think is the right thing to do."

26 So Joshua saved the lives of the Gibeonites and did not permit the army of Israel to kill them. **27** But from that day on, Joshua forced the Gibeonites to become the Israelites' slaves. They cut wood and carried water for the Israelites. They also cut wood and carried water for Yahweh's altar, at whatever place he was going to choose **for them to build it**. They still cut wood and carry water at this present time.

10 **1** This is what happened next. Adoni Zedek was the king who ruled the city of Jerusalem. He heard that Joshua's army had captured the city of Ai and completely destroyed it, just as they had done to the city of Jericho and its king. He also heard that the people of the city of Gibeon had made a peace agreement with the Israelites and were living among them. **2** The people of Jerusalem and their king became very afraid, because the city of Gibeon was as large as the cities that had kings ruling them. It was larger than the city of Ai, and all its men were strong warriors. **3** So Adoni Zedek, the king of Jerusalem, sent messages to several other kings. He sent them to Hoham, who ruled the city of Hebron, to Piram, who ruled the city of Jarmuth, to Japhia, who ruled the city of Lachish, and to Debir, who ruled the city of Eglon. **4** Adoni Zedek told them, "Come and help me attack the city of Gibeon because its people have made a peace agreement with Joshua and the Israelites."

5 So these five kings of the Amorites joined their armies together. These were the kings of the cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. These kings and their armies went up with all their soldiers and surrounded the city of Gibeon and started to attack it.

6 The men of Gibeon sent this message to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal: "Protect us, because we are your subjects. Come quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings who live in the hill country have joined their armies together to attack us!"

7 So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including his best fighting men. **8** Yahweh told Joshua, "Do not be afraid of those armies. I will enable you to defeat them. None of them will be able to resist you."

9 Joshua and his army marched all night from Gilgal and surprised the enemy armies. **10** Yahweh caused the enemy armies to become confused when they saw the Israelites. The Israelites won a great victory at Gibeon. They chased their enemies along the road that goes up to Beth Horon. They continued to kill enemy soldiers all the way to the cities of Azekah and

Makkedah. **11** As the enemies were running away from the Israelites down the road from Beth Horon, Yahweh threw large hailstones on them from the sky. These hailstones continued to fall on them all the way to the city of Azekah. The hailstones killed more of the enemy soldiers than the Israelites killed with their swords.

12 On that same day, when Yahweh was helping the Israelites defeat the Amorites, Joshua spoke to Yahweh. While the Israelites were watching, Joshua prayed, asking Yahweh to make the sun stay in place over the city of Gibeon and to make the moon stay in place over the Valley of Aijalon.

13 And the sun stayed in place, and the moon did not move, until the Israelites had defeated their enemies. There is an account of this in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped moving, and it stayed in the middle of the sky and did not go down for about a whole day.

14 There has never been another day like that one, either before or after it, when Yahweh answered someone's prayer in such an amazing way. Yahweh was truly fighting for the Israelites.

15 Then Joshua and all of the Israelite soldiers returned to their camp at Gilgal.

16 During the battle, the five kings ran away and hid in a cave near the city of Makkedah. **17** But Joshua's soldiers discovered their hiding place and they told him that the five kings were hiding in a cave near Makkedah. **18** Joshua told his men, "Roll some large stones to block the entrance of the cave. Put some guards there to watch it." **19** Then Joshua said to all the other soldiers, "Do not stay here in the camp. Chase after your enemies and attack those who have been the slowest to escape. Do not let them reach their cities. Yahweh your God will enable you to defeat them."

20 So Joshua and his soldiers chased and killed the Amorite soldiers until they had destroyed them almost completely. Only a few of them escaped to the safety of their cities, which had defensive walls. **21** Then the whole Israelite army returned to Joshua at the camp at Makkedah with no enemy soldiers pursuing them. No one in that region dared to say anything bad about any of the Israelites.

22 Then Joshua said, “Remove the stones from the entrance of the cave and bring those five kings to me.” **23** So his soldiers brought out the five kings from the cave. They were the kings of the cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. **24** When they brought these kings to Joshua, he called together the whole Israelite army. He said to the commanders who fought the battle with him, “Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings.” So they came and put their feet on the kings’ necks **to show that they had completely defeated them and their armies**. **25** Then Joshua said to his commanders, “Yahweh will do the same thing to all the enemies whom you will fight. So you have no reason to be afraid of them. Fight very bravely!” **26** Then Joshua killed the five kings and hanged their bodies on five trees. He left their bodies hanging on the trees until evening. **27** At sunset, Joshua ordered his men to take the bodies down from the trees and throw them into the cave where the kings had hidden. They put large stones at the entrance of the cave. Those stones are still there today.

28 That same day, Joshua’s army captured the city of Makkedah. They completely destroyed that city and its king. They also completely destroyed all of the people and animals in the city. They made sure no one survived. This is just what they had done to the city of Jericho.

29 Then Joshua led the whole Israelite army from Makkedah to the city of Libnah and they attacked it. **30** Yahweh also helped the Israelites conquer this city and its king. The Israelite soldiers killed everyone in the city. They made sure no one survived. They treated the king of Libnah the same way they had treated the king of Jericho.

31 Next, Joshua led the whole Israelite army from Libnah to the city of Lachish. They set up their camp near the city and began their attack. **32** After one day of fighting, Yahweh helped the Israelites conquer Lachish. They killed everyone in the city, just as they had done to Libnah. **33** During this time, King Horam of the city of Gezer brought his army to help Lachish. But Joshua’s army defeated them and killed them all.

34 Then Joshua led the whole Israelite army from Lachish to the city of Eglon. They set up their camp near the city and began their attack. **35** They captured Eglon that same day. They killed everyone in the city. They destroyed all the people, just as they had done in Lachish.

36 After this, Joshua led the whole Israelite army up from Eglon to the city of Hebron, and they attacked it. 37 They captured the city and all the nearby towns. They killed everyone, including the king. They made sure no one survived, just as they had done in Eglon.

38 Then Joshua and the whole Israelite army turned back and went to the city of Debir and attacked it. 39 They captured the city, its king, and all the nearby towns. They killed everyone. They made sure that. No person who lived in that area survived. They did the same things to Debir and its king that they had done to the cities of Hebron and Libnah and their kings.

40 This is how Joshua conquered the whole region. He defeated all the kings and their people in the hill country, the southern desert, the western foothills, and the eastern slopes. He killed everyone in these places, as Yahweh, the God of Israel, had commanded. 41 Joshua's army defeated all the people living in the area from Kadesh Barnea to the city of Gaza, including the region of Goshen all the way to the city of Gibeon. 42 Joshua defeated all these kings and took control of their territories in a single campaign. He was able to do that because Yahweh, the God of Israel, was fighting for his people.

43 After this, Joshua and the whole Israelite army returned to their camp at Gilgal.

11 1 When King Jabin of the city of Hazor learned what had happened, he sent messages to several other kings. He sent them to King Jobab of the city of Madon, to the king of the city of Shimron, and to the king of the city of Achshaph. 2 He also sent messages to the kings who ruled in the northern hill country and to the kings in the Jordan River Valley, south of the lake of Chinnereth; the kings in the low country, and the kings in the western foothills near the city of Dor. 3 He sent messages to the Canaanite peoples who lived on both the eastern and western sides of the Jordan River. He also sent them to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, and Jebusites who lived in the hill country, and to the Hivites who lived near Mount Hermon in the region of Mizpah. 4 All these kings gathered their armies together to fight. Their soldiers were as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. They also brought a great number of horses and chariots with them. 5 All these kings joined their forces and set up their camp together near the lake of Merom, preparing to fight against the Israelites.

6 Then Yahweh said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of these armies, because at about this
time tomorrow, I will help you defeat all of them. When you attack them, you must cripple
their horses and burn their chariots.”

7 So Joshua and his whole army traveled to the lake of Merom and made a surprise attack
against their enemies. 8 Yahweh helped the Israelites defeat them. The Israelite army pursued
them all the way to the great city of Sidon in the north, to Misrephoth Maim, and to the Valley
of Mizpah in the east. The Israelites kept fighting until they had killed all their enemies.
9 Then Joshua did exactly what Yahweh had told him to do. He crippled their horses and
burned their chariots.

10 After that, Joshua went back and captured the city of Hazor. He killed its king. Hazor
was the main city that ruled all the kingdoms that had fought against Israel. 11 The Israelite
army killed everyone in the city. They made sure that no person survived. Then they burned the
city.

12 Joshua’s army captured all these cities and killed all their kings. They destroyed
everything that was in the cities. They did exactly what Moses, Yahweh’s servant, had
commanded them to do. 13 The Israelites did not burn any of the cities that people had built on
hills, **because they wanted to live in them**. But Joshua did burn the city of Hazor, even though it
was on a hill. 14 The Israelites took for themselves all the valuable things and all the livestock
from these cities. But they killed all the people. They did not let any of the people live.
15 Moses had passed on to Joshua everything that Yahweh had told him to do. And Joshua
carried out all of these commands completely. He did exactly what Yahweh had ordered Moses
to do.

16 Joshua and his army took control of all these regions: the hill country, the southern
desert, the whole region around Goshen, the western foothills, the Jordan River Valley, and the
mountains of Israel with their foothills. 17 They conquered all the land from Mount Halak
which rises toward Seir and even as far as the town of Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon
below Mount Hermon. Joshua captured and killed all the kings of these areas. 18 Joshua and
his army spent many years fighting against all these kings. 19 Only the people of the city of
Gibeon, who were Hivites, agreed to become subjects of the Israelites. The Israelite army had

to capture all the other cities by fighting. **20** Yahweh led the people in all these cities to want to fight against Israel so that the Israelites would destroy them completely without showing any mercy. This is what Yahweh had commanded Moses to do.

21 During that time, Joshua's army went through all the hill country and killed all the descendants of Anak who lived there. They killed them in the cities of Hebron, Debir, and Anab and in every other place in the hills where the tribes of Judah and Israel lived. Joshua's army destroyed all these people and their cities. **22** No descendants of Anak remained alive in the land of Israel. The only ones who survived lived in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. **23** Joshua took control of all the land, just as Yahweh had told Moses to do. Then Joshua gave the land to the Israelites. He assigned each tribe a part of the land that would belong to them. After this, none of the people groups who had been living in the land fought against the Israelites again.

12 **1** While the Israelites were still on the east side of the Jordan River, they defeated the kings who ruled there, and they took their land. This land extended from the Arnon River gorge in the south to Mount Hermon in the north. It included all of the plain on the eastern side of the Jordan.

2 **One king they defeated was** Sihon, the king of the Amorites. He lived in the city of Heshbon. He ruled the area **south of Heshbon** as far as the middle of the Arnon River gorge. So his land included the city of Aroer on the edge of that gorge. Sihon ruled the area **north of Heshbon** to the Jabbok River. That river was the boundary between his land and the land of the Ammonites. Sihon also ruled over half of the region of Gilead. **3** Sihon also ruled over the land on the eastern plain along the Jordan, from the Sea of Chinnereth south to the Sea of Salt. He also ruled over the land east of the Sea of Salt from Beth Jeshimoth south to Mount Pisgah.

4 The other king whom the Israelite army defeated was Og, the king of the region of Bashan. He was the last of the descendants of the giant Raphaites. He lived in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. **5** He ruled over the area from Mount Hermon and Salekah in the north, and over all Bashan in the east, and to the borders of the Geshurites and Maacathites to the west. Og ruled over half of the region of Gilead, as far as the border of the land ruled by Sihon, king of Heshbon.

6 Moses, Yahweh's servant, and the whole Israelite army had defeated the armies of those kings. Then Moses gave their land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

7 Joshua and the Israelite army also defeated kings who ruled over the land on the west side of the Jordan River. That land was between Baal Gad in the valley near Lebanon to Mount Halak, which goes up to Seir. Joshua gave land to the tribes of Israel for them to possess,
8 This land included the hill country, the lowlands, the plain along the Jordan, the mountainsides, in the desert, and in the southern Judean wilderness. It had belonged to the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The kings that the Israelites conquered were those of the following cities: Jericho, Ai (which was near Bethel),
10 Jerusalem, Hebron, 11 Jarmuth, Lachish, 12 Eglon, Gezer, 13 Debir, Geder, 14 Hormah, Arad, 15 Libnah, Adullam, 16 Makkedah, Bethel, 17 Tappuah, Hepher, 18 Aphek, Lasharon,
19 Madon, Hazor, 20 Shimron Meron, Akshaph, 21 Taanach, Megiddo, 22 Kedesh, Jokneam in the Carmel area, 23 Dor in the Naphoth Dor area, Goiim in the region of Gilgal, 24 and Tirzah.

There was a total of thirty-one kings that the Israelite army defeated.

13 1 When Joshua was very old, Yahweh said to him, "Joshua, you are now an old man, but there is still a lot of land for your army to capture. 2 Here is a list of the lands you must still capture: The Geshur region and all the area where the Philistines live. 3 Those go as far south as Shihor, the brook that forms a boundary with Egypt. They go as far north as the city of Ekron. Conquer this land as you have conquered the Canaanite lands. Capture the cities that the five rulers of the Philistines govern: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. Next, also conquer the land of the Avvites, 4 who live south of the Philistines and Geshurites. Next, you must also capture the rest of the regions where the Canaanites live. They extend from Arah, which belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, near the boundary with the Amorites. 5 Also conquer the land where the Gebalites live and all of Lebanon east of there, from the city of Baal Gad near Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

6 I will force the people to leave who live in the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth Maim, including all the people of the city of Sidon. That way you will be able to live there

instead. Your job will be to give that area to the Israelite people when you divide the land among them. That is what I have ordered you to do. **7** Divide all that land among the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh so that it will always belong to them."

8 Moses had already assigned the rest of the tribe of Manasseh land where it could live. Moses, Yahweh's servant, had also already assigned land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad on the east side of the Jordan River. **9** Their lands went as far south as Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon River valley. They included the city that is located in the middle of the valley. They also included the whole plateau of Medeba, all the way to the city of Dibon. **10** These lands also included the cities that Sihon king of the Amorites had ruled. He had reigned in Heshbon. These lands went all the way to the border of the Ammonites. **11** They included Gilead and the region of the Geshurites and Maacathites, including all of Mount Hermon. They also included all of the region of Bashan as far as the city of Salekah. **12** They also included the whole kingdom of Og within the region of Bashan. He had reigned in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. (Og was the last living descendant of the Rapahites.) Moses had attacked the people who had lived in all of these places, and he forced them to leave. **13** However, the Israelites did not force the Geshurites and Maacathites to leave. Instead, these people live with the Israelites even at the present time.

14 But Moses did not give the Levites any assignment of land. They were the only tribe that received no land. Yahweh, the God of Israel, told them that the burnt offerings he received, **which provided their food,** would be their possession.

15 This is the land that Moses assigned to all of the clans of the tribe of Reuben: **16** It went as far south as the city of Aroer on the edge of the Arnon River valley. It included the city that is in the middle of the valley. It also included the region of the plateau near Medeba. **17** It also included Heshbon and all the cities that were in the plateau. These cities were Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon, **18** Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, **19** Kiriathaim, Sibmah, and Zereth Shahar, which stands on a hill within the valley. **20** Their territory also included Beth Peor, the slopes of Mount Pisgah, Beth Jeshimoth, **21** and all the cities situated along the plateau, and the whole kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites. He formerly reigned in the city of Heshbon. Moses defeated Sihon, and he also defeated the leaders of Midian. Their names were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba. The Midianites lived within Sihon's kingdom, and these leaders

served him as vassals. **22** When the Israelites used their swords to kill many of their enemies, they also killed Balaam son of Beor. He was a man who tried to use magic to tell the future. **23** The border of the people of the tribe of Reuben was the Jordan River. This was the land that Moses gave to the clans of the tribe of Reuben. They lived in the cities and villages there.

24 Moses also gave land to the tribe of Gad. He gave each of the clans of the Gadites the land they would need to live on. **25** They lived near Jazer and in all the cities of Gilead. Their land included half of the land where the Ammonites had once lived **before King Sihon took it from them.** Their land went all the way to Aroer, which is a city east of Rabbah. **26** Their land extended from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, all the way to Mahanaim and to the region of Debir. **27** Their land was also in the valley. It included the cities of Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon. This was the rest of the kingdom of Sihon, who had ruled from the city of Heshbon. His kingdom had bordered on the Jordan River and extended to the lower end of the Sea of Chinnereth, eastward beyond the Jordan River. **28** This is the land that Moses assigned to the clans of the tribe of Gad. They lived in the cities and villages there.

29 Moses also gave land **on the east side of the Jordan River** to half of the tribe of Manasseh. Moses gave each clan of this half-tribe the land it would need to live on. **30** Their territory went as far as Mahanaim. It included the whole region of Bashan, the whole former kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan. There are sixty cities in that region. **31** Their land also included half of the region of Gilead, as well as the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. (People sometimes call those the royal cities of Og in Bashan). Moses gave these lands to the descendants of Machir son of Manasseh. The clans of about half of Machir's descendants lived there.

32 These were the lands that Moses distributed to those Israelites on the plains of Moab, on the other side of the Jordan River, just east of Jericho. **33** But Moses gave no land to the tribe of Levi. Yahweh, the God of Israel, promised them that he would be their inheritance.

14 **1** Here is a description of the areas where the Israelites settled in the land of Canaan. Eleazar the high priest, Joshua, and the family leaders of the Israelite tribes divided the land among them. **2** They decided what land to give to each of the remaining nine and one-half tribes by casting lots. Yahweh had told Moses to tell them to do it that way, and so they did.

3-4 Moses had given land as a permanent possession to two and a half tribes before Israel crossed over the Jordan River. Moses did not give any land to the tribe of Levi. (Rather than give them part of the land, Moses gave them cities to live in. He also gave them pastureland around those cities for their livestock so they could sustain their families.) Even so, there were nine and a half of the twelve Israelite tribes that still needed land, because the descendants of Joseph had become two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. **5** The people of Israel did just what Yahweh commanded Moses. They gave out portions of the land as permanent possessions.

6 Some men from the tribe of Judah went to Joshua while he and all the Israelites were at Gilgal. Among those men was Jephunneh's son Caleb. He said to Joshua, "I am sure that you remember what Yahweh said to the prophet Moses concerning you and me when we were at Kadesh Barnea. **7** I was 40 years old at that time. Moses sent me from Kadesh Barnea with you and some other men to explore this land. When we returned, I gave to Moses an accurate report about what we had seen. **8** The other Israelites who went with us gave a report that caused the people to be afraid. But I did everything that Yahweh my God wanted me to do. **I encouraged the people to conquer the land.** **9** That day Moses promised me, 'The land that you walked on will become yours as your permanent possession. It will always belong to you and your descendants. I promise that it will be yours because you did everything that Yahweh, my God, wanted you to do.'

10 Now Yahweh has done for me what he promised he would do. It has been 45 years since Moses made that promise to me during the time when we Israelites were still in the wilderness. But just as Yahweh promised, he has kept me alive and well all during that time. Look at me! I am now 85 years old. **11** But I am still as strong today as I was on the day that Moses sent me to explore this land. I have the same strength now that I had as a young man. I can still fight wars as a soldier or as a commander. **12** So please give me the hill country that Yahweh promised to give to me on that day long ago. At that time, you heard me say that the Anakim lived there. You heard me say that their cities were large and that they had walls around them to protect them. **And that is still true today.** But I hope that Yahweh will help me to force the people there to leave, just as Yahweh promised."

13 Then Joshua asked God to bless Caleb the son of Jephunneh. Joshua gave Caleb the city of Hebron as his possession. **14** In this way, Hebron became the permanent possession and the home of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. To this day his descendants live there because

Caleb did everything that Yahweh, the God of Israel, wanted him to do. **15** (Now people used to call Hebron Kiriath Arba. Arba had been a very famous Anakite.) No enemies were attacking the Israelites at this time, so they were able to divide up the land peacefully.

15 **1** The Israelite leaders assigned land by lot to the clans of the tribe of Judah. In the south, their land extended to the wilderness of Zin at the border of Edom.

2 Their southern border started at the bay of the Sea of Salt that turns toward the south. **3** From there, the border of the territory of Judah went southward and up the hill of Akrabbim. It continued along to Zin, and then it went up once more south of Kadesh Barnea, beside Hezron. It went up to Addar and then bent around to Karka. **4** From there it continued past Azmon, and from there it ran beside the brook of Egypt. From there, it turned west to the Great Sea. That was the southern border of the territory of the tribe of Judah. **5** Its eastern border was the Sea of Salt, up to where the Jordan River flows into it. Its northern border began at the bay of the Sea of Salt near where the Jordan River flows in. **6** The northern border continued from that point and went to Beth Hoglah. From there it went to the north of Beth Arabah until it reached the great stone that Bohan son of Reuben set up. **7** From that point, the border went through the Valley of Achor to Debir. From there it turned north again to go to Gilgal. Gilgal is north of the road that goes over the hill of Adummim, on the south side of the river valley. From Gilgal, the border extended west to the springs at En Shemesh until it reached En Rogel. **8** From that point, the border went along the south slope of the hill of the city of Jerusalem, where the Jebusites live. The boundary went to the top of the hill on the west side of the Valley of Hinnom, at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim. **9** From there, the border extended northwest to the top of the hills leading to the spring of Nephtoah. From there, it went to the cities near Mount Ephron. From there, the border extended west toward Baalah. (People now call that city Kiriath Jearim.) **10** Then the border continued west past Baalah to Mount Seir. Then it went southwest along the north side of Mount Jearim. (People also call that Mount Chesalon.) The border then went down to Beth Shemesh, and from there it passed by Timnah. **11** The border continued northwest to the hill north of Ekron. From there, it extended west to Shikkeron and past Mount Baalah. It went on to Jabneel and then northwest to the Great Sea.

12 The western border of the territory of the tribe of Judah was the Great Sea. All the clans of Judah lived inside those borders.

13 Yahweh commanded Joshua to give part of the land of the tribe of Judah to Caleb. So Joshua gave Caleb a city that people called Kiriath Arba. They named it after Arba, the ancestor of the Anakites. But people now call that city Hebron. **14** Caleb forced the three clans of the Anak people group to leave Hebron. Those were the Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai clans. **15** Then Caleb left there and went to fight against the people who were living in Debir. (People used to call that city Kiriath Sepher). **16** Caleb said, "I need someone to lead the attack against Kiriath Sepher and conquer that city. I will allow the man who does that to marry my daughter Aksah." **17** Caleb had a younger brother whose name was Kenaz. Kenaz had a son whose name was Othniel. Othniel commanded the soldiers who captured the city of Kiriath Sepher. So Caleb allowed Othniel to marry his daughter Achsah.

18 Aksah came **to Kiriath Sepher** to marry Othniel. When she got there, she convinced Othniel to let her ask her father for some land they could farm. She **went to see her father and respectfully** got off the donkey she was riding. Caleb asked her, "What would you like me to do for you?"

19 She replied, "Please do a favor for me. You have given **my husband and** me some land in an area where it is very dry. So please also give us some land that has springs on it." So Caleb gave her some land on higher ground that had a spring and some land on lower ground that had a spring.

20 Here is a list of the towns in the land that belonged to the clans of the tribe of Judah.

21 The following cities that belonged to the tribe of Judah were in the southern wilderness, near the border of the region of Edom:

Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, **22** Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, **23** Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, **24** Ziph, Telem, and Bealoth, **25** Hazor Hadattah, Kerioth Hezron (people also call that city Hazor), **26** Amam, Shema, Molodah, **27** Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, **28** Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah, **29** Baalah, Iyim, Ezem, **30** Eltolad, Kesil, Hormah, **31** Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, **32** Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. There were these 29

cities in the southern part of the territory of Judah. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages,

33 The following cities were in the northern part of the western foothills within the territory of Judah: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,

34 Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, **35** Jarmuth, Adullam, Sokoh, Azekah,
36 Shaaraim, Adithaim, and Gederah. (People also call that city Gederothaim). These were the 14 cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

37 The following cities were in the southern part of the western foothills within the territory of Judah: Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad, **38** Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel,
39 Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, **40** Kabbon, Lahmas, Kitlish, **41** Gederoth, Bethdagon, Naamah, and Makkedah.

These were the 16 cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

42 The following cities were in the central part of the western foothills within the territory of Judah: Libnah, Ether, Ashan, **43** Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, **44** Keilah, Aczib, and Mareshah. These were the nine cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

45 Judah's territory also included the city of Ekron and its surrounding towns and villages. **46** From Ekron to the Great Sea, Judah's territory also included all the settlements near the city of Ashdod, including their villages.

47 Judah's territory also included the city of Ashdod itself. And its surrounding towns and villages. It also included the city of Gaza and its surrounding towns and villages. It included all of the land down to the brook of Egypt and to the Great Sea. The border followed the coastline.

48 The following cities were in the southwestern part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Shamir, Jattir, Sokoh, **49** Dannah, Kiriath Sannah (people also call that

city Debir), [50] Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, [51] Goshen, Holon, and Giloh. These were the 11 cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

[52] The following cities were in the south central part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Arab, Dumah, Eshan, [53] Janim, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, [54] Humtah, Kiriath Arba (now called Hebron), and Zior. These were the nine cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

[55] The following cities were in the southeastern part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, [56] Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, [57] Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah. These were the ten cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

[58] The following cities were in the central part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, [59] Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon. These were the six cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

[60] The following two cities and their villages were in the northern part of the hill country within the territory of Judah: Rabbah and Kiriath Baal. (People also call that city Kiriath Jearim).

[61] The following cities were in the desert near the Sea of Salt within the territory of Judah: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, [62] Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi. These were the six cities in that area. The people of Judah lived in them and in their surrounding villages.

[63] However, the army of the tribe of Judah was not able to force the Jebusites who were living Jerusalem to leave. So the Jebusites are still living among the people of Judah in Jerusalem today.

16 [1] The Israelite leaders assigned land to the two tribes that were descendants of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. The southern border of this land started at the city of Jericho by the Jordan River. It went through the springs east of Jericho and up into the desolate area in the hill country around the city of Bethel. [2] From Bethel it went to the city of Luz and then to the city

of Ataroth. That city was in the territory where the Arkite people group lived. 3 From there it extended west to the edge of the land where the Japhletite people group lived. It then went farther west to the area near the city of Lower Beth Horon. From there it continued west to the city of Gezer and from there to the Great Sea. 4 That was the territory that the descendants of Joseph, the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, received as their permanent possession. 5 The border of the land that the leaders assigned to the clans of the tribe of Ephraim started at the town of Ataroth Addar. From there, it went west to Upper Beth Horon. 6 From there it headed west and went north of the town of Mikmethath. Then it turned eastward toward the town of Taanath Shiloh and went east of the town of Janoah. 7 Then it continued from Janoah to the towns of Ataroth and Naarah. From there it went to the city of Jericho, and it ended at the Jordan River. 8 The northern border extended west from the town of Tappuah to the valley of Kanah and from there to the Great Sea. This was the land that the Israelite leaders assigned to all the clans of the tribe of Ephraim. 9 The leaders assigned some cities and their dependent villages to the people of Ephraim that were actually within the territory of the tribe of Manasseh. Those cities were part of their total territory.

10 The people of the tribe of Ephraim could not force the Canaanites who were living in Gezer to leave. So those Canaanites still live there. However, the people of Ephraim did force them to become their slaves.

17 1 This is a description of the land that the Israelite leaders gave to the tribe of Manasseh, the descendants of the oldest son of Joseph. Manasseh's oldest son was Machir, and his grandson was Gilead. Their descendants were great soldiers, so Moses gave them land that they conquered in the regions of Gilead and Bashan. 2 The Israelite leaders gave land on the west side of the Jordan River to the other clans that were descendants of Manasseh. The were the clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida. Manasseh was a son of Joseph, and those were the names of his male descendants.

3 There was a man whose name was Zelophehad. His father was Hepher, his grandfather was Gilead, his great-grandfather was Machir, and his great-great-grandfather was Manasseh. Zelphehad had no sons. He only had daughters. Their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah. 4 These women went to speak with Eleazar the high priest, to Joshua, and to the other Israelite leaders. They told them, "We want you to give us some land just as you

have given to the men in our tribe. Yahweh told Moses that he should give to us some land.”
So Eleazar did what Yahweh had commanded. He gave some land to the daughters of
Zelophehad, just as he had done for their uncles. **5** So the tribe of Manasseh eventually had ten
sections of land west of the Jordan River and two sections on the east side of the Jordan River
in Gilead and Bashan. **6** That was because the Israelite leaders gave land on the west side of
the Jordan River to these female descendants of Manasseh, just as they had given to his male
descendants The leaders had also given land in the region of Gilead to other descendants of
Manasseh.

7 The land that the leaders gave to the tribe of Manasseh was between the land where
the tribe of Asher lives and the town of Mikmethath, which is near the city of Shechem.
The border of this land extended south to the spring of Tappuah. **8** The land near the city of
Tappuah belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. But Tappuah itself was on the border with the
tribe of Ephraim, and in fact it belonged to the Ephraimites. **9** The border extended south
to the brook of Kanah. All the cities south of that stream belonged to the tribe of Ephraim.
The border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook of Kanah. It extended to the
Great Sea. **10** The land to the south belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, and the land to the
north belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. The Great Sea was Manasseh’s border. The tribe
of Asher was on the north side of the boundary, while the tribe of Issachar was to the east.

11 But there were cities inside the territory of the tribes of Issachar and Asher that
belonged to people from the tribe of Manasseh. So did the towns around these cities. These
cities were Beth Shan, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo. Those last three cities
are in the hilly area around the city of Dor.

12 The men of the tribe of Manasseh were not able to force the people who lived in those cities
to leave. The Canaanite people resisted them and continued to live in their land. **13** When the
people of Israel became strong enough, they forced those Canaanites to work for them as
slaves. But they were not able to take their land away from them.

14 Some representatives of the descendants of Joseph (that is, of the tribes of Ephraim and
Manasseh) came to speak with Joshua. They told him, “Yahweh has blessed us by giving us
many children. So you should have given us more than one small portion of land to live on.”

15 Joshua replied to them, “As you say, there is probably not enough room for you in the hill country we have assigned you. But since you do have a lot of people, you can also occupy the land where the Perizzites and the Raphaites now live. You can go up to that forest area and cut down trees to clear fields where you can plant your crops.”

16 The representatives of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh answered, “The hill country is not big enough for us. But we cannot spread out into the plain because of the Canaanites who live there. The Canaanites in Beth Shan and the surrounding towns have chariots that have iron parts.”

17 Joshua replied further to these representatives of the descendants of Joseph, that is, of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. He told them, “Your people are indeed very numerous and very powerful. So I will give you some more land. 18 The hill country will also belong to you. You will have to cut down the trees in order to clear fields where you can plant crops. But all of that land will belong to you. I also believe that you will be able to force the Canaanites to leave the plain so you can live there. You will be able to do that even though they are strong and have chariots that have iron parts.”

18 1 Since no people groups were fighting against the Israelites any longer, they were able to meet together. They gathered at the city of Shiloh, and there they set up the tent where they worshiped Yahweh. 2 Now seven of the Israelite tribes had not yet occupied any land.
3 Joshua said to the people of those seven tribes, “Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, has promised to give to you land. So you should not delay going into that land and occupying it.

4 Choose three men from each of your seven tribes. I will send them out to explore the parts of the land that no tribe has occupied yet. They are to write a description of seven different regions that will become the territories of your seven tribes. Then they are to bring the description back to me. 5 They will divide the remaining land into seven parts. The tribe of Judah will keep its land in the south, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will keep their land in the north. 6 But in their report, the men from the seven tribes should describe how we can divide the remaining land into seven parts. They will bring the report to me. Then, while Yahweh our God is watching, I will cast lots to decide which part should be assigned to each

tribe. 7 But I will not assign any land to the tribe of Levi. Instead, their reward is to be Yahweh's priests. And the tribes of Gad and Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh have already received land on the east side of the Jordan River. Moses, Yahweh's servant, gave it to them."

8 When the men the tribes had chosen got ready to leave, Joshua told them, "Go and explore the land. Then write a report of what you have seen and bring it back to me. Then, while Yahweh is watching, I will cast lots here at Shiloh to determine what area each tribe will receive." 9 So the men left and walked through the land that no tribe had yet occupied. Then they described in a scroll each of the seven parts into which they would divide the land. They listed the cities in each part of the land. Then they returned to Joshua, who was still at Shiloh.
10 **Joshua read their report. Then,** while Yahweh was watching, he cast lots at Shiloh to decide which parts of the land would belong to each of the seven Israelite tribes.

11 The lot selected the clans of the tribe of Benjamin to receive the first part of the land. This part was between the territory of the tribe of Judah and the territory of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

12 Its northern border started at the Jordan River and extended west, along the northern side of Jericho, into the hill country. From there the border extended farther west to the wilderness near Beth Aven. 13 From there it extended to Luz and went south of that city. (People now call that city Bethel). From there it went down to Ataroth Addar, which is on the hill south of Lower Beth Horon.

14 Then, from the hill opposite the south side of the city of Beth Horon, the western side of the border turned and extended south to Kiriath Baal. (People now call that town Kiriath Jearim. People from the tribe of Judah live there.) That was the western border.

15 The southern border of their land started near Kiriath Jearim and extended west to the springs of Nephtoah. 16 From there, it extended down to the bottom of the hill near the Valley of Ben Hinnom, on the north side of the Valley of the Raphaites. The border then extended down along the Hinnom Valley, south of the city where the Jebusites lived, to En Rogel. 17 From there the border went north to En Shemesh and continued to Geliloth near the hill of Adummim. Then it extended to the big stone that Reuben's son Bohan set up.

18 From there the border extended to the northern edge of Beth Arabah and down into the plain along the Jordan. 19 From there, it extended east to the northern edge of Beth Hoglah and ended at the north end of the Sea of Salt, where the Jordan River flows into that sea. That was the boundary on the south.

20 The Jordan River was the eastern boundary. These were the borders all round the territory of the clans of the tribe of Benjamin.

21 In the eastern part of their territory, the clans of the tribe of Benjamin lived in these cities: Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, 22 Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, 23 Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, 24 Kephar Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba. The people of Benjamin lived in these 12 cities and their villages.

25 In the western part of their territory, the people of Benjamin lived in these cities: Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, 26 Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah, 27 Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, 28 Zelah, Haeleph, Jebus (the city where the Jebusites lived, which people now call Jerusalem), Gibeah, and Kiriath. The people of Benjamin lived in these 14 cities and their villages. The clans of the tribe of Benjamin received this land and these cities as a permanent possession.

19 1 Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Simeon to receive the second part of the land. The land Joshua gave them was in the middle of Judah's territory.

2 Simeon's territory included the following cities: Beer Sheba, Sheba, Moladah, 3 Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem, 4 Eltolad, Bethul, and Hormah. 5 Simeon's land also included the cities of Ziklag, Beth Markaboth. Hazarsusah, 6 Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhen. There were 13 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

7 The land that Joshua assigned to the tribe of Simeon also included the four cities of Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan and their surrounding villages. 8 It also included some villages in an area that extended south to Baalath Beer. (People also call that city Ramah of the Negev.) This was the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Simeon.

9 The leaders of Israel had assigned more land to the tribe of Judah than it needed, so they gave part of that land to the tribe of Simeon.

10 Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Zebulun to receive the third part of the land.

Its southern border started at Sarid. 11 It extended west to Maralah and on to Dabbesheth, and then it extended to the brook in front of the city of Jokneam. 12 The border turned to the east from Sarid and went to the area near Chisloth Tabor. Then it went on to Daberath and farther on to Japhia. 13 From there, it extended east to Gath Hepher and Eth Kazin and north to Rimmon. From there, the border turned toward Neah. 14 From Neah, the border extended south to Hannathon, and from there it went to the Valley of Iphtah El. 15 Zebulun's territory included the cities of Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem. Altogether there were 12 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

16 That was the land that Joshua allotted to the clans of the tribe of Zebulun, including the cities and their surrounding villages.

17 Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Issachar to receive the fourth part of the land. 18 Their land included the cities of Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem, 19 Hapharaim, Shion, and Anaharath. 20 Issachar's land also included the cities of Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, 21 Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pazzez. 22 The border of Issachar's territory was close to the cities of Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth Shemesh. It ended in the east at the Jordan River. Altogether there were 16 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

23 Those were the cities and surrounding villages in the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Issachar.

24 Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Asher to receive the fifth part of the land.

25 Their land included the cities of Helkath, Hali, Beten, Akshaph, 26 Allammelek, Amad, and Mishal. The western border started at Mount Carmel and Shihor Libnath.

27 From there it extended southeast to the city of Beth Dagon until it reached the territory of tribe of Zebulun at the Valley of Iphtah El. From there, the border extended north to Beth Emek and Neiel and Cabul. 28 From there, it extended west to the cities of Abdon, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah and then continued to Great Sidon. 29 From Sidon, the border extended south toward Ramah and to the city of Tyre, which had strong walls around it. From there, the border extended west to Hosah. It ended at the Great Sea, in the region of Aczib. 30 The territory of Asher included the cities of Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob. Altogether there were 22 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

31 Those cities and their villages were within the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Asher.

32 Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Naphtali to receive the sixth part of the land.

33 The border of Naphtali's land started in the west at the huge oak tree at Zaanannim, near the city of Heleph. It extended east through Adami Nekeb and Jabneel. It then went to Lakkum, and it ended at the Jordan River. 34 The western boundary extended through Aznoth Tabor as far as Hukkok. It extended to the borders of the tribe of Zebulun at the south, to the border of the tribe of Asher on the west, and to the border of the tribe of Judah at the Jordan River to the east. 35 Within Naphtali's territory, there were many cities that had strong walls around them. These cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, 36 Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, 37 Kedesh, Edrei, and En Hazor. 38 Naphtali's cities with strong walls also included Yiron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh. Altogether there were 19 cities, together with their surrounding villages.

39 Those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that Joshua assigned to the clans of the tribe of Naphtali.

40 Then Joshua threw the lot again, and this time it selected the clans of the tribe of Dan to receive the seventh part of the land. 41 Their land included the cities of Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, 42 Shaalabbin, Aijalon, and Ithlah. 43 Dan's land also included the cities of Elon, Timnah, Ekron, 44 Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, 45 Jehud, Beneberak, Gath Rimmon, 46 Me Jarkon, Rakkon, and the area near Joppa.

47 But the people of the tribe of Dan were not able to take control of the whole land that Joshua assigned to them. So they went northeast and fought against the people who lived in the city of Leshem. They defeated and killed all those people. Then they settled in that city. They changed its name to Leshem Dan. Dan was the name of the ancestor of their tribe.

48 All of those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that Joshua assigned to the clans in the tribe of Dan.

49 After the Israelite leaders had divided the land among the tribes, they also assigned some land to Joshua. 50 They gave him the city of Timnath Serah to live in. Yahweh had said that he could have whatever city he wanted, and that was the city he chose. It was in the hill country in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua repaired the city and lived there.

51 Those were the areas that the Israelite leaders assigned to the various tribes. The high priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders of each tribe divided up the land while they were all at Shiloh. They cast lots to decide which area each tribe would receive. They did that at the entrance of the sacred tent while Yahweh was watching. In that way they completed dividing up the land.

20 1 Then Yahweh said to Joshua, 2 "Tell the Israelite people that they should choose some cities to which people can flee in order to be safe, as I told Moses that you should do. 3 If someone kills another person accidentally, without intending to kill that person, then he can run to one of these cities and be safe.

4 When that person arrives at the gate of one of those cities, he must stop there and tell the leaders of the city what happened. **If they believe him,** they must allow him to enter the city, and they must give him a place to live among them. 5 Suppose some relative of the dead person comes to that city to try to take revenge by killing the person who fled. The leaders of that city must not allow the relative to take him away and kill him, because what happened was accidental. He did not hate that person in the past. 6 The person who killed someone must stay in the city where he fled until it holds a trial to decide his case. **If they determine that the killing was accidental,** he must still stay there until the current high priest dies. Then the man may return safely to his own home."

7 So the Israelites chose several cities where people could flee to be safe. They chose
Kedesh in the region of Galilee, in the hill country where the tribe of Naphtali lived. They
chose Shechem, in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived. And they chose Kiriath
Arba in the hill country where the tribe of Judah lived. (People now call that city Hebron.)
8 They also chose some cities on the other side of the Jordan River, east of Jericho. They chose
Bezer, on elevated land in the wilderness where the tribe of Reuben lived. They chose Ramoth
in the region of Gilead, in the land where the tribe of Gad lived. And they chose Golan in the
region of Bashan, where the tribe of Manasseh lived. 9 Any Israelite or any foreigner who
lived among them who had killed someone accidentally was allowed to flee to one of those
cities. There he would be safe from any relative of the dead person who wanted to come and
kill him in revenge. He could stay in that city until the people there held a trial to decide
whether he was telling the truth when he said that he did not kill that person on purpose.

21 1 The family leaders of the Levite clans came to Shiloh to speak with Eleazar the
priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the family leaders of the Israelite tribes. 2 There in Shiloh, west
of the Jordan River, they said to them, "Yahweh told Moses that you should give us cities
where we can live and where our animals can graze." 3 So the Israelites obeyed this command
from Yahweh. They gave some cities and the surrounding fields to the tribe of Levi out of their
own lands that their leaders had assigned to them.

4 First, the Israelite leaders cast lots to assign some cities to the Levites from the clan of
Kohath who were priests because they were descendants of Aaron. The leaders assigned 13
cities to them within the territories of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. 5 To the
other Levites from the clan of Kohath, the Israelite leaders assigned ten cities within the
territories of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lived on the
west side of the Jordan River.

6 To the Levites from the clan of Gershon, the Israelite leaders assigned 13 cities within
the territories of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh in the
region of Bashan.

7 To the Levites from the clan of Merari, the Israelite leaders assigned 12 cities within the
territories of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

8 In this way, the Israelite leaders assigned these cities and the surrounding fields to the people of the tribe of Levi. That was just what Yahweh had told Moses they should do.

9 These are the names of the cities that the Israelite leaders assigned to the tribe of Levi within the territory of the tribes of Judah and Simeon.

10 First, the Israelite leaders assigned cities by lot to the descendants of Aaron. They belonged to the Kohathite clan of the tribe of Levi.

11 The Israelite leaders assigned Kiriath Arba to them in the hill country of Judah. They also gave the pasturelands around the city. (That city got its name from Arba, the ancestor of the Anak people group. But people now call that city Hebron.) **12** However, the Israelite leaders had already assigned the cultivated fields and villages surrounding Kiriath Arba to Caleb son of Jephunneh.

13 In this way, the Israelite leaders assigned Hebron and its surrounding fields to the descendants of Aaron the priest. Hebron was one of the cities to which people could flee if they accidentally killed a person. The leaders also gave Aaron's descendants the city of Libnah with its surrounding fields, **14** Jattir with its surrounding fields, and Eshtemoa with its surrounding fields, **15** They also gave Holon with its surrounding fields, and Debir with its surrounding fields, **16** and Ain, Juttah, and Beth Shemesh. In total, the leaders gave them nine cities with their surrounding fields. These cities were within the territory of the tribes of Judah and Simeon.

17 The Israelite leaders also gave the descendants of Aaron some cities, with the surrounding fields, in the area that the tribe of Benjamin possessed: Gibeon, Geba,
18 Anathoth, and Almon, four cities with their surrounding fields.

19 Altogether, the Israelite leaders assigned 13 cities with their surrounding fields to the Levites who were priests because they were descendants of Aaron.

20 The other Levite clans who were descendants of Kohath received four cities within the territory of the tribe of Ephraim.

21 The leaders gave them Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim along with its surrounding fields. It was a city to which someone could flee for safety who killed a person unintentionally. The leaders also gave them Gezer with its surrounding fields, **22** Kibzaim, and Beth Horon, four cities. All with their surrounding fields.

23 These clans that were descendants of Kohath also received four cities with their surrounding fields within the territory of the tribe of Dan. These cities were Eltekeh, Gibbethon, **24** Aijalon, and Gath Rimmon, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

25 These clans that were descendants of Kohath also received cities within the territory of the half of the tribe of Manasseh that had settled on the west side of the Jordan River. These cities were Taanach and Gath Rimmon, two cities with their surrounding fields.

26 There were ten cities in all, together with their surrounding fields, that these other clans that were descendants of Kohath received.

27 The Israelite leaders also cast lots in order to assign cities and their surrounding fields to the Levite clans of the descendants of Gershon.

These clans received two cities within the territory of the half of the tribe of Manasseh that had settled on the east side of the Jordan River. One of those cities was Golan in the region of Bashan. It was one of the cities to which someone could flee for safety who killed a person unintentionally. The other city was Beeshtarah. That made two cities, with their surrounding fields.

28 These clans also received some cities and the surrounding fields within the territory of the tribe of Issachar. Those cities were Kishion, Daberath, **29** Jarmuth, and En Gannim, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

30 These clans also received some cities and the surrounding fields within the territory of the tribe of Asher. These cities were Mishal, Abdon, **31** Helkath, and Rehob, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

32 These clans also received some cities within the territory of the tribe of Naphtali. One of these cities was Kedesh in the region of Galilee. It was one of the cities to which

people could flee for safety if they killed a person unintentionally. The other cities were Hammoth Dor and Kartan. That made three cities, all with their surrounding fields.

33 Altogether, therefore, the Gershonite clans received 13 cities, together with their surrounding fields.

34 The Israelite leaders also assigned cities to the last group of Levites, those who belonged to the clans that were descendants of Merari.

These clans received some cities, with the surrounding fields, within the territory of the tribe of Zebulun. These cities were Jokneam, Kartah, **35** Dimnah, and Nahalal, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

36 These clans also received cities, with their surrounding fields, within the territory of the tribe of Reuben. These cities were Bezer, Jahaz, **37** Kedemoth, and Mephaath, four cities, all with their surrounding fields.

38 These clans also received cities, with their surrounding fields, within the territory of the tribe of Gad. One of these cities was Ramoth, which was one of the cities in Gilead to which people could flee for safety if they killed a person unintentionally. Another city was Mahanaim. **39** There were also the cities of Heshbon, and Jazer. That made four cities in all, together with their surrounding fields.

40 In all, this last group of Levite clans, the ones that were descendants of Merari, received 12 cities when the Israelite leaders cast lots for them.

41 So altogether, the Levites received 48 cities within the territories of the other tribes of Israel. They also received the fields around those cities. **42** Yes, for each one of these cities, the Levites also received the surrounding fields. That was true for all of them.

43 Yahweh had promised the ancestors of the Israelites that he would give them all this land, and this was how he did that. The Israelite people took control of these areas and settled down in them. **44** Yahweh had also told the ancestors of the Israelites that they would be able to live peacefully in the land, and he made that happen too. None of their enemies were able to

fight against them and defeat them. Instead, Yahweh helped Israel defeat all their enemies.
45 Yahweh kept every promise he made to the Israelites. Every promise came true.

22 1 Joshua then summoned the leaders of the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of
Manasseh. 2 He told them, “You have done everything that Moses the servant of Yahweh,
commanded you to do. You have also done what I commanded you to do. 3 For a long time
you have helped the other tribes to defeat their enemies. You have obeyed everything that
Yahweh your God taught you and commanded you to do. 4 He promised to settle your fellow
Israelites peacefully in this land, and he has done what he promised. So now you may go back
to your homes in the land that Moses gave to you on the east side of the Jordan River. 5 But
now you must be careful to do what Moses commanded and taught you to do. You must love
Yahweh your God and live your life as he wants you to live. You must obey his commands and
be loyal only to him. Do this as you worship him and serve him by everything that you think
and everything that you do.”

6 Then Joshua wished for Yahweh to do good things for them, and he sent them back to
their homes. 7 The people Joshua sent back to the east side of the Jordan River included half
of the tribe of Manasseh. Moses had given them the region of Bashan there. Joshua had given
the other half of that tribe land on the west side of the Jordan River with the other Israelites.
When Joshua sent them away to their homes, he wished for Yahweh to do good things for them
too. 8 He said to them, “You may take back to your homes much money, many animals, and
silver, gold, bronze, iron, and very many beautiful clothes. You got these things from your
enemies when you defeated them. Share them with the people of your tribes back home.”

9 So the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh left the other people of
Israel at Shiloh in the region of Canaan. They returned home to the region of Gilead, which
belonged to them because they had conquered it when Moses told them that Yahweh had said
they could do that.

10 They arrived at the western bank of the Jordan River, still in the land of Canaan. There
the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar. It was a very large and
impressive altar. 11 People from that area began to report to the other Israelites, “The people of
Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the entrance to the land of

Canaan. It is on the banks of the Jordan River, on the western side where most of the Israelites live.” **12** When the other Israelites heard this, they all met together at the city of Shiloh. They decided they would fight against those tribes **to make them tear down that altar**.

13 But first, the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, who was the leader of all the priests, across the river to talk with the people of Reuben, Gad, and eastern Manasseh. **14** They also sent one leader from each of the ten tribes of Israel **that had settled west of the Jordan River**. Each of those men was an important person within his own clan.

15 Those leaders went to the region of Gilead to talk with the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. They said, **16** “All the other Israelites want to know why you have been so disloyal to the God whom we Israelites worship! **He commanded that there should only be one altar, at his sacred tent.** But you have now disobeyed Yahweh by building your own altar here in this place. You have rebelled against Yahweh! **17** You are acting as if we did not disobey Yahweh badly enough at Mount Peor**, where we worshiped a false god**. We still feel very ashamed for doing that. As a punishment, Yahweh sent a deadly sickness among the Israelites, and many of them died from it. **18** So you should not disobey Yahweh like this! If you rebel against Yahweh like this now, soon he will severely punish all of the Israelites.

19 **You seem to think you need your own altar, but you have built it on our side of the Jordan River.** If **you built it there because you think** your land is ritually impure, move back to the land that belongs to Yahweh, where Yahweh’s sacred tent is. We will share our land with you. But do not rebel against Yahweh or against us by building yourselves an altar other than the one at the sacred tent. **20** Recall how Achan son of Zerah was so disloyal to Yahweh and kept some things from Jericho even though we were supposed to destroy everything there. This made Yahweh angry with all of us Israelites. Because of what that one man did wrong, many other Israelites died.”

21 The leaders of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and of the half tribe of Manasseh replied to the Israelite clan leaders, **22** “We affirm that Yahweh is the only true God! He knows why we built this altar, and we want all the Israelites to know why as well. If we have broken our promise to obey Yahweh, punish us by killing us right now! **23** If we have disobeyed Yahweh’s command by building ourselves an altar other than the one at the sacred tent, or if we have

built this altar so we can offer sacrifices, grain offerings, or sacrifices to promise friendship with him, in violation of the law, Yahweh will find out what we have done and punish us.

24 But that is not why we built this altar. We built it because we were afraid that your descendants might speak to our descendants at some future time and tell them that they had no right to worship Yahweh, the God whom Israelites worship. **25** We were afraid that they would tell our descendants that Yahweh had made the Jordan River a boundary between themselves and the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad **and half of Manasseh**. We were afraid that your descendants would tell our descendants that they had nothing to do with Yahweh. And then they might try to stop our descendants from worshiping Yahweh.

26 So we decided that we should build an altar, but not for burning sacrifices or making offerings. **27** Instead, we wanted it to be a monument to prove to you, to ourselves, and to all of our descendants after us that we will truly worship Yahweh. We will indeed worship him by bringing to his sacred tent our sacrifices to burn and our other sacrifices and the other offerings we make to promise friendship with him. We built this altar so your descendants would never say to our descendants in the future that they had nothing to do with Yahweh.

28 In the future, if your descendants said that, then our descendants could tell them to look at the altar that we, their ancestors, had made. They would see that it was exactly like the altar at Yahweh's sacred tent. Our descendants would tell them that they do not burn sacrifices on it, but it is a monument that proves that Israelites on both sides of the Jordan River worship Yahweh. **29** We certainly do not want to rebel against Yahweh or disobey him. We never intended to use this altar for burning sacrifices, making flour offerings, or making any other sacrifices. We know that there is only one true altar for Yahweh our God, and that is the one in front of the sacred tent."

30 When Phinehas the priest and the clan leaders whom the Israelites had chosen when they met together heard what the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had said, they were pleased. **31** And Phinehas said to them, "Now we recognize that Yahweh is helping all of us Israelites. We understand that you were not being disloyal to him when you built that altar. Because you have not disobeyed Yahweh, we are sure that he will not punish us."

32 Then Phinehas son of Eliazar, the high priest, and the Israelite leaders who had accompanied him left the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. They returned from the

region of Gilead to Canaan, where the other Israelites were. There they told them what had happened. 33 They were all pleased, and they thanked God. They did not talk anymore about fighting against the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half of Manasseh to destroy them in the land where they lived.

34 The other Israelites no longer planned to attack the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and Manasseh because they had explained that the altar was a monument that proved to the eastern tribes that the western tribes also worshiped Yahweh as their God.

23 1 A long time later, once Yahweh had enabled the Israelites to live peacefully, with none of the surrounding nations threatening them, Joshua had become very old.

2 Joshua then called for all of Israel's elders, leaders, judges, and officials to come and listen to him. When they arrived, he told them, "I am now very old. 3 You have seen how, for your sake, Yahweh defeated all of these enemy people groups. Yahweh our God has fought for us. 4 I am telling you now that you will be able to defeat the nations that still remain. Their lands will also become the permanent possession of your tribes. You will have all of the land from the Jordan River in the east to the Great Sea in the west, including the land of the nations I defeated when I was commanding the Israelite army. 5 Yahweh your God will enable you to defeat them, and he will force those people to leave their lands. Then you will be able to live there, just as he promised you would.

6 But you must be very careful to obey everything that Moses wrote in the Book of the Law. Do not disobey anything that he wrote. 7 Do not make friends with any of the people groups that are still in this land. Do not pray to their gods, and do not make oaths using the names of their gods. Do not worship those gods, and do not bow down to them. 8 Instead, remain loyal to Yahweh your God, as you have been doing.

9 Yahweh has forced many very strong nations to leave so that you could live here. From the time you entered this land until now, no one has been able to resist you. 10 It is as if one of your soldiers can make a thousand enemy soldiers run away. That is because Yahweh your God is fighting for you as he promised to do. 11 But you must be very careful to keep loving Yahweh your God.

12 Suppose you become disloyal to Yahweh and make friends with the people groups that
are still living in this land. Suppose you let your daughters marry their sons and your sons
marry their daughters. Suppose you regularly do things together. 13 I can assure you that if you
do that, Yahweh your God will no longer force them to leave so that you can live here. They
will become like different kinds of traps that will catch you. They will become like whips that
hurt your skin. They will become like thorns that stick you in the eye. Your people group will
become weaker and weaker until none of you live any longer in this good land that Yahweh
your God has given to you.

14 It is almost time for me to die, as everyone else does. You know deep within you that
Yahweh he has done every single thing he promised to do for you. 15 He has given to you all
the good things that he promised to give you. However, if you do these wrong things that I
have described, he will just as surely make the bad things happen to you that he also described.
None of you will still be living in this good land that Yahweh your God has given to you.
16 Suppose you do not obey the covenant that Yahweh made with you. Suppose you go and
worship other gods and bow down to them. Then Yahweh will become very angry with you.
Very soon none of you will be living any longer in this good land that he has given to you."

24 1 Joshua brought all of the Israelites together in the city of Shechem. Their elders,
leaders, judges, and officials all reported there in the presence of God. 2 Joshua told all the
Israelites, "This is what Yahweh, the God we Israelite people worship, wants me to tell you:
'Long ago, your ancestors, including Abraham's father Terah and Abraham's younger brother
Nahor, lived far beyond the Euphrates River. There they worshiped other gods. 3 But I took
your ancestor Abraham from beyond the Euphrates River, and I led him into the land of
Canaan. I gave him many descendants through his son Isaac. 4 I gave Isaac his own sons,
Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to live in. But I sent Jacob and his children
down to Egypt, and they lived there for many years.

5 When the Egyptians made your ancestors slaves, I sent Moses and his brother Aaron to
Egypt to rescue them. I caused many terrible plagues that made the people of Egypt suffer.
After that, I brought your people out of Egypt. 6 When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt,
they came to the sea. The Egyptian army pursued them with chariots and on horseback as far
as the Sea of Reeds. 7 Then you pleaded with me to help you, and I caused darkness to come

between you Israelites and the Egyptian army. **I made a dry path through the sea so that the Israelites could go through it, but when the Egyptians tried to follow them,** I made the water come back and it covered the Egyptian army **so all the soldiers drowned**. You Israelites saw what I did to the Egyptians. After that you lived in the desert for many years.

8 Then I brought you to the land where the Amorites lived, on the east side of the Jordan River. They attacked you, but I enabled you to defeat them and capture their land. You saw everything that I did for you. **9** Then Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, prepared his army and attacked Israel. He sent for Balaam son of Beor and told him to get me to curse your people. **10** But I would not do what Balaam asked. Instead, I made him bless you, so that he was not able to harm you.

11 Then you all crossed the Jordan River and came to Jericho. The army of Jericho fought against you, as did the armies of the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I enabled you to conquer them all. **12** I sent swarms of hornets ahead of you, and this helped you two Amorite kings. You did not do this with your own weapons. **I, Yahweh, was the one who actually defeated them.** **13** So I gave you a land that you had not cleared or plowed, and I gave you cities that you did not build. Now you live in those cities, and you eat the grapes from grapevines that you did not plant and olives from trees that you did not plant.'

14 **That was what Yahweh wanted me, Joshua, to tell all of you.** Now you must worship Yahweh and obey him genuinely and consistently. Throw away the idols that your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the far side of the Euphrates River and when they lived in Egypt. Worship Yahweh alone. **15** Now if you do not want to worship Yahweh, then you must decide today what gods you will worship. You may decide that you want to worship the gods that your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the other side of the Euphrates River. You may decide that you want to worship the gods that the Amorites worshiped who used to live in this land. But as for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh."

16 The Israelites responded, "We would never abandon Yahweh and worship other gods! **17** Yahweh is our God! After all, he was the one who brought our ancestors here from Egypt. He rescued them from that land where they were slaves. We saw him perform great miracles, and he protected us when we were traveling, even though we had to pass through the territory

of many other nations. **18** Yahweh forced all the people who were here to leave so that we could live here. He defeated the Amorites who lived in this land. So we will worship only Yahweh. He is our God."

19 But Joshua replied to the people, "You do not seem to realize what is involved in worshiping Yahweh! He is a holy God, and he will not allow you to worship any other gods. He will not overlook it if you break his laws or sin against him. **20** If you abandon Yahweh and worship other gods, then he will stop helping you and instead he will harm you until he has destroyed you. He will do that even after he has done such good things for you." **21** But the people answered Joshua, "Even so, we want to worship Yahweh."

22 Then Joshua said, "You are making a promise to what you have said. You have chosen Yahweh, and you are promising to worship him alone." They replied, "Yes, that is what we promise to do." **23** So Joshua told them, "Then you must throw away any other idols you have, and devote yourselves entirely to Yahweh, the God who has done so much for us Israelites." **24** The people replied, "We will worship Yahweh as our God, and we will obey what he tells us to do."

25 On that same day, Joshua made a covenant with the people. There at Shechem, he wrote down for them all the decrees and laws that Yahweh commanded them to obey. **26** He wrote all those things down in the book of the law of God. Then he got a large stone and set it up there at Shechem, under the large oak tree that grew beside the place where Yahweh's sacred tent was. **27** Joshua told all the people, "Look! This stone will always be a reminder to us. This is the place where I told you what Yahweh wanted to say to you **and you promised that you would serve him**. This stone will remind you of your promise so that you are not disloyal to God." **28** Then Joshua sent the people back to their homes in the places that the leaders had assigned to them.

29 After this, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died. He was 110 years old when he died. **30** The Israelites buried his body on his own property in Timnath Serah. That is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. **31** The people of Israel continued to worship Yahweh during Joshua's lifetime and during the lifetimes of the elders who outlived Joshua. Those elders had seen everything that Yahweh had done for Israel. **32** The people of Israel had

brought Joseph's bones with them when they left Egypt. Now they buried his bones at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob had bought long ago for the price of 100 pieces of silver. He had bought it from Hamor, the father of Shechem. That piece of land became a permanent possession for Joseph's descendants. **33** Eleazar son of Aaron also died. The Israelites buried his body at Gibeah, the city that belonged to his son Phinehas, in the hill country of Ephraim.

Judges

1 **1** After Joshua died, the Israelite people asked Yahweh, “Which of our tribes should send
their soldiers into the hill country to attack the Canaanites first?”

2 Yahweh replied, “The soldiers of the tribe of Judah must attack first. I have already made
the people of Judah the owners of the land **in Canaan that Joshua assigned to them**.”

3 Then the men of Judah went to their fellow Israelites, the men from the tribe of Simeon.
They said to them, “Come and help us fight the Canaanites. That way we will be able to
conquer the territory that Yahweh has given to us. **If you do that,** we will go with you and help
you conquer the territory that Yahweh has given to you.” So the soldiers of the tribe of Simeon
went with the soldiers of the tribe of Judah.

4 So the soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon went together. Yahweh enabled them
to defeat the army of the Canaanites and Perizzites. At the city of Bezek, they killed about
10,000 enemy soldiers. **5** The king of Bezek, Adoni-Bezek, personally commanded his army to
defend his city. But the Israelite soldiers were able to defeat his army of Canaanites and
Perizzites. **6** Adoni-Bezek tried to run away, but the soldiers from the tribes of Judah and
Simeon chased him and caught him. Then they cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

7 Adoni-Bezek said, “My army captured 70 kings. We cut off their thumbs and big toes.
After that, we gave them little to eat, and we humiliated them. Because I did that to them, now
God has done the same thing to me.” Then the soldiers took Adoni-Bezek to the city of
Jerusalem. That was where he died.

8 The soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon fought against the people of Jerusalem,
and they captured that city. They killed all the people who lived there, and they burned down
all the buildings in the city.

9 After that, the soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon went to fight against the
Canaanites who lived in the hill country, the southern wilderness, and the western lowland.

10 The soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon also went to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the city of Hebron. (People used to call that city Kiriath Arba). **Those Canaanites were from** the clans of Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. The soldiers defeated them.

11 Then they left that area and went to fight against the people who lived in the city of Debir. (People used to call that city Kiriath Sepher.) **12** A man whose name was Caleb **was commanding the soldiers. He** told them, "I need someone to lead the attack against Kiriath Sepher and conquer that city. I will allow the man who does that to marry my daughter Aksah." **13** Caleb had a younger brother whose name was Kenaz. Kenaz had a son whose name was Othniel. Othniel commanded the soldiers who captured the city of Kiriath Sepher. So Caleb allowed Othniel to marry his daughter Aksah.

14 Aksah came **to Kiriath Sepher** to marry Othniel. When she got there, she convinced Othniel to let her ask her father for some land they could farm. She **went to see her father and respectfully** got off the donkey she was riding. Caleb asked her, "What would you like me to do for you?"

15 She replied, "Please do a favor for me. You have given **my husband and** me some land in an area where it is very dry. So please also give us some land that has springs on it." So Caleb gave her some land on higher ground that had a spring and some land on lower ground that had a spring.

16 The father-in-law of Moses was a Kenite. Some of his descendants had been living in the area of Jericho, which people called the City of Palms. They went with some people from the tribe of Judah to the wilderness **in the southern part** of the territory that belonged to that tribe. They settled with those Judeans in the dry region that is around the city of Arad.

17 The army of the tribe Judah then went with their fellow Israelites, the army of the tribe of Simeon**, to help them conquer the territory that Joshua had assigned to them.** They defeated the Canaanites who lived in the town of Zephath. They completely destroyed that city. Then they gave it a new name, Hormah**, which means "complete destruction."** **18** The soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Simeon also captured the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron and all the land around those cities. **19** So Yahweh helped the soldiers from Judah to capture the hill country. But they could not force the people who were living in the plains to leave. That was because those people had **better weapons. They had** chariots that had iron parts.

20 The people of the tribe of Judah gave the city of Hebron to Caleb because Moses had promised him that he could have that city. Caleb forced the three clans whose ancestor was Anak to leave that area. **21** But the tribe of Benjamin could not force the Jebusites to stop living in the city of Jerusalem. So those Jebusites stayed in Jerusalem and lived there with the tribe of Benjamin. They are still living with them there now.

22 Just as the soldiers from Judah and Simeon had done, soldiers from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh went **to conquer the territory that Joshua had assigned to them. They first attacked** the city of Bethel, and Yahweh helped them. **23** They sent some spies to find out everything they could about Bethel. (People used to call that city Luz.) **24** The spies saw a man who was coming out of the city. They said to him, "If you show us a way to get into the city, then we will be kind to you **and not kill you when we capture the city**." **25** So the man showed them a way to get into the city. The soldiers from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh went in and killed all the people who lived in the city. But they allowed the man and his whole family to leave safely. **26** That man went to the area where the Hittites lived. He built a city there and named it Luz. That is still the name of that city now.

27 There were Canaanites living in the cities of Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Megiddo. They were also living in the villages around those cities. The soldiers from the tribe of Manasseh were not able to force them to leave their homes. That was because those Canaanites fought very hard to stay there. **28** Later, the Israelites became stronger, and they forced the Canaanites to work for them as their slaves. But they did not force all the Canaanites to leave their land. **29** The soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim were not able to force the Canaanites who were living in the city of Gezer to leave. So the Canaanites continued to live in that city with the tribe of Ephraim. **30** There were also Canaanites living in the cities of Kitron and Nahalol. The soldiers from the tribe of Zebulun were not able to force them to leave. So those Canaanites stayed in those cities and lived with the tribe of Zebulun. But the people of Zebulun forced them to work as their slaves. **31** There were Canaanites living in the cities of Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek, and Rehob. The soldiers from the tribe of Asher were not able to force them to leave. **32** So those Canaanites continued to live in those cities. The people of the tribe of Asher lived with them, because they were not able to force them to leave. **33** There were Canaanites living in the cities of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath. The soldiers from the tribe of Naphtali were not able to force them to leave. So those Canaanites

continued to live in that area. The people of the tribe of Naphtali lived with them. But they forced the ones who lived in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath to work as their slaves. **34** The Amorites forced the people of the tribe of Dan to live in the hills. That was because they did not allow them to come down and live on the plain. **35** The Amorites fought hard to keep living at Mount Heres and in the cities of Aijalon and Shaalbim, **and so the Israelites were not able to force them to leave**. But when the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh became stronger, they forced those Amorites to work as their slaves. **36** The land where the Amorites lived extended from the Ascent of Akrabbim **toward the west** beyond Sela, up into the hill country.

2 **1** An angel representing Yahweh went from Gilgal to a place that the people of Israel would soon call Bochim. He said to the Israelite people, "Your ancestors were slaves in Egypt, but I set them free, and they escaped. I promised your ancestors that I would give this land to you, and I have now brought you to it. I told them I would never break the promises I made to them. **2** But I also told them that you, their descendants, must never make any peace treaties with the people who lived in this land. You were supposed to tear down all the altars **where those people made sacrifices to idols**. But you have not obeyed me. You have done a wicked thing **by making peace treaties with them and not destroying their altars**. **3** So now, as I warned you **through Joshua**, I will no longer help you force the people who live here to leave. They will bother you continually, as if they were thorns in your sides. And when you worship their idols, it will be as if a hunter catches you in a trap **and kills you**."

4 After the angel representing Yahweh had said these things to all the Israelites, they cried loudly. **5** So they named that place Bochim, which means "weeping." They offered sacrifices there to Yahweh.

6 After Joshua had sent the people of Israel away **from the assembly at Shechem**, each group had gone to occupy the land that Joshua had assigned to them. **7** The Israelites had obeyed Yahweh for as long as Joshua was alive. After he died, there were still some older leaders alive who had seen all the miracles that Yahweh had done for Israel. For as long as those leaders were alive, the people had continued to obey Yahweh.

8 Yahweh's servant Joshua was 110 years old when he died. Joshua's father's name was Nun. **9** The Israelites buried the body of Joshua within the territory that he had received from

Moses. That was at Timnath Heres, north of Mount Gaash. That is in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim settled.

10 Finally, all the people who had lived at the same time as Joshua died. After that, more people grew up who did not know Yahweh. They had also not seen the miracles he had done for the people of Israel. **11-13** The Israelites then did things that Yahweh had said were very evil. They worshiped different idols that represented gods such as Baal. They stopped worshiping Yahweh, the God their ancestors had worshiped. He was the one who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt. Instead, they began to worship the various gods that the people groups around them worshiped. They bowed down to those gods in order to honor them. This caused Yahweh to be very angry. When the Israelites stopped worshiping Yahweh and started worshiping Baal, they also started worshiping female fertility goddesses such as Ashtoreth. **14** This made Yahweh very angry with the Israelites. So he allowed people from other groups to attack the Israelites and steal their crops and animals. Yahweh allowed the hostile nations around them to conquer them. The Israelites were no longer able to defeat their enemies in battle. **15** Whenever the Israelites went to fight their enemies, Yahweh always worked against them and allowed their enemies to defeat them. That was just what he had warned them he would do. So the Israelites were greatly distressed.

16 But then Yahweh brought leaders to them. These leaders rescued the Israelites from the powerful enemies who had been attacking them. **17** But the Israelites did not obey those leaders. Instead, they were unfaithful to Yahweh and worshiped false gods. They bowed down to idols that represented those gods. They were not like their ancestors. Their ancestors had obeyed what Yahweh commanded. But these younger people quickly stopped behaving as their ancestors had behaved. **18** The Israelites were groaning because their enemies were treating them badly and making them suffer. Yahweh heard them groaning and felt sorry for them. So he brought leaders to them, and he helped each leader rescue the people from their enemies. He did that for as long as the leader was alive. **19** But after that leader died, the people stopped living as God wanted. Instead, they did even more evil things than the Israelites who had lived before them. They worshiped other gods and bowed down to them and did what they thought those gods wanted them to do. They stubbornly continued to do very wicked things.

20 This made Yahweh very angry with the Israelite people. He said, “These people have disobeyed the agreement that I made with their ancestors. They have not done what I told them

to do. 21 When Joshua died, there were still some other people groups living in this land.
Because the Israelites are disobeying me, I will no longer help them force any of those people
groups to leave. 22 Instead, I will use those people groups to create difficult situations for the
Israelites. That will show whether or not they will consistently do what I want them to do, as
their ancestors did." 23 That is why Yahweh did not allow Joshua and his army to force those
people groups to leave. Instead, he allowed those people groups to stay in the land for a long
time after the people of Israel arrived.

3 1 The younger Israelites had not fought in any of the wars against the Canaanites.
Yahweh wanted them to show faith and courage. So he allowed some enemy people groups to
stay in the land. 2 Yahweh did that in order to teach the new generation of Israelites how to
wage war, since they had no experience fighting battles before. 3 These are the people groups
that Yahweh allowed to stay in the land: the Philistines and their five leaders, the Canaanites,
the people living in and around the city of Sidon, and the Hivites living in the mountains of
Lebanon between Mount Baal Hermon and Lebo Hamath. 4 Yahweh left those people groups
there to test the Israelites. He wanted to see whether they would obey the commands that he
had told Moses to give to their ancestors. 5 That was why the Israelites lived among the
Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 6 The
Israelite men married women from those people groups. They also allowed their daughters to
marry men from those people groups. And they worshiped the gods of those people groups.

7 The Israelites then did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. They stopped
worshiping Yahweh, the God their ancestors had worshiped. Instead, they started to worship
idols that represented gods such as Baal and goddesses such as Asherah. 8 This made Yahweh
very angry with the people of Israel. So he allowed Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram
Naharaim in Mesopotamia, to conquer them. Cushan-Rishathaim ruled over the people of Israel
for eight years. 9 But when the people of Israel pleaded with Yahweh to help them, he brought
a leader to rescue them. This leader was Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz.
10 Yahweh's Spirit gave Othniel special strength and courage to be a leader for the Israelites.
Then he led an army that fought against the army of Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram.
Yahweh enabled the Israelites to win this battle. So Othniel defeated Cushan-Rishathaim and

he no longer ruled over the people of Israel. 11 After that, the land of Israel was a peaceful place for the next 40 years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.

12 Then the Israelites once again did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. Because they were doing these things, Yahweh gave Eglon, the king of Moab, a stronger army than the Israelites had so that he could defeat them. 13 Eglon persuaded the leaders of the Ammonites and the Amalekites to join their armies with his army to attack Israel. They defeated the Israelites and captured Jericho, which people called the City of Palms. 14 Then King Eglon of Moab ruled the Israelites for 18 years.

15 After that, the Israelites again pleaded with Yahweh to help them. So he brought another leader to rescue them. This leader was Ehud, the son of Gera. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, and he was left-handed. King Eglon of Moab made the Israelites send him goods such as gold, silver, animals, and crops every year so that he would not attack them. This time, the Israelites put Ehud in charge of delivering those goods. 16 Ehud had made a special sword to bring with him on this trip. Both of its edges were sharp, and it was only half a meter long. He hid it under his clothes by strapping it onto his right thigh. 17 Ehud made sure that King Eglon of Moab received all of the goods that the Israelites had sent. (Eglon was a very fat man.) 18 After he had delivered all of the goods, Ehud told the men who had carried them to go back to Israel. 19 Ehud went with the men as far as the boundary stones near the city of Gilgal. There he told the other men to go on, but he himself turned around and went back to the king of Moab. When he arrived at the palace, he told the king, “Your majesty, I have a secret message for you.” So the king told all his servants to be quiet, and he sent them out of the room.

20 This left Eglon sitting all by himself in the room of his palace where he stayed cool in the heat of summer. Ehud came close to him and said, “I have a message for you from God.” The king stood up from his throne to receive the message. 21 As the king got up, Ehud reached with his left hand and pulled the dagger from his right thigh. He plunged it into the king’s stomach. 22 Ehud plunged the sword in so far that even the handle went into the king’s belly. Ehud did not pull the sword out. He left it there, with the king’s fat surrounding it. From the force of the blow, Eglon’s bowels discharged. 23 Then Ehud stepped out of the room into its entrance area. He closed the doors to the room, and he bolted them shut as he closed them.

24 Then Ehud ran away from the palace. King Eglon's servants came back, but they found that someone had locked the doors to the room. They said **to each other**, "The king must be relieving himself in there." **25** So they waited. But when the king did not open the doors of the room for a long time, they became concerned because they had left him alone for so long. They got a key and unlocked and opened the doors. And they saw that their king was lying on the floor dead **from the sword wound**.

26 The servants had taken so long to enter the king's room that Ehud had time to escape. He ran back to Israel, passed by the boundary stones **at Gilgal**, and arrived at the city of Seirah. **27** That city was in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim lived. When Ehud got there, he blew a ram's horn **to call the people to join him in fighting against the people of Moab**. So the Israelites went with him down from the hills **toward the Jordan River**. Ehud was leading them.

28 Ehud told the men he was leading, "Yahweh is going to enable us to defeat our enemies, the people of Moab. So follow me!" So they followed him down to the Jordan River, and they stationed some of their men at the place where people could walk across the river into Moab. That way they could kill any people from Moab who tried to cross the river to escape. **29** At that time, the Israelites killed about 10,000 Moabite soldiers **who had been occupying the city of Jericho**. They were all strong and capable soldiers, but the Israelites killed them all. **30** On that day, the Israelites conquered the people of Moab. After that, the land of Israel was a peaceful place for the next 80 years.

31 After Ehud died, Shamgar, the son of Anath, became their leader. In one battle, Shamgar killed 600 Philistine soldiers even though his only weapon was an ox goad. In that way, he rescued the Israelites from the Philistines.

4 **1** After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. **2** A strong king whose name was Jabin ruled the city of Hazor and many other parts of the region of Canaan. Yahweh allowed Jabin to conquer the Israelites with his army because they had disobeyed him. The commander of Jabin's army was a man whose name was Sisera. He lived in a place that people called Harosheth Hagoyim. **3** Sisera's army had 900 chariots

that had iron parts. He cruelly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years. Then they pleaded with Yahweh to help them.

4 At that time, a woman whose name was Deborah was a leader of the people of Israel. She was a prophetess. Her husband's name was Lappidoth. **5** She would sit under her palm tree (which people called Deborah's Palm Tree) at a place between Ramah and Bethel in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim lived. The Israelites would come to her and ask her to help them settle their disputes. **6** One day she sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam. She called him to come to her. He was from Kedesh, in the area where the descendants of Naphtali lived. She told him, "Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, is commanding you to do something. He is telling you to gather an army of **at least** 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Have this army assemble at Mount Tabor. **7** Sisera is the commander of King Jabin's army. Yahweh will make him come near you with his chariots and his army. He will come to the Kishon River **a few miles away from you**. Yahweh will enable your men to defeat them."

8 Barak told her, "I will only go if you go with me. If you do not go with me, then I will not go."

9 She replied, "I will certainly go with you. But because you would not go without me, Yahweh will enable a woman to defeat Sisera. The result will be that no one will honor you for doing that." So Deborah left her home and went with Barak to Kedesh. **10** Barak called for the men of Zebulun and Naphtali to assemble at Kedesh. With Barak as their commander, 10,000 men came there. Deborah accompanied this army.

11 Now there was a man whose name was Heber who was a Kenite. (He was a descendant of Moses' father-in-law Hobab.) He had moved away from the rest of the Kenites. He was living at this time near the big oak tree at Zaanannim, near Kedesh.

12 People told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had assembled an army on Mount Tabor. **13** When Sisera heard that, he gathered all his troops. They brought all 900 of the chariots that had iron parts, and they marched from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River **to attack Barak and his army**.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, “It is time to attack! Today Yahweh is going to enable your army to defeat the army of Sisera. Yahweh is already fighting against Sisera for you.” So Barak led his thousands of troops down the slopes of Mount Tabor **to fight with Sisera**. **15** As Barak and his troops advanced, Yahweh caused Sisera and all his chariots and his army to become disorganized. The Israelites were killing so many of his soldiers that Sisera jumped down from his chariot and ran away. **16** But Barak and his soldiers chased after the other chariots and enemy soldiers all the way to Harosheth Haggoyim. They killed all of the soldiers in Sisera’s army. None of them got away.

17 But Sisera ran away to the place where Heber the Kenite was staying. He went up to the tent where Heber’s wife Jael lived. He did that because Heber and his family were good friends of Sisera’s master Jabin, the king of the city of Hazor**, so he thought Jael would hide him**.

18 Jael went out to greet Sisera. She said to him, “Sir, please come into my tent. You do not have to be afraid.” So he went into her tent **and lay down**, and she covered him with a blanket **to hide him**.

19 He said to her, “I am thirsty, so would you please give me some water?” So she opened a leather container of milk, and she gave him a drink. Then she covered him with the blanket again.

20 He told her, “Stand near the door of the tent **to meet anyone who arrives**. If someone **who is looking for me** comes and asks you, ‘Is anyone else here?’ say ‘No.’”

21 Sisera was very exhausted, so he soon fell asleep. While he was sleeping, Jael picked up a hammer and a tent peg and crept quietly over to him. Suddenly she pounded the peg into his skull. She hammered it all the way through his head until it stuck into the ground. This killed Sisera.

22 Meanwhile, Barak was looking for Sisera. When he got to Jael’s tent, she went out to greet him. She told him, “The man you are looking for is in here!” So he followed her into the tent, and there he saw Sisera lying dead with the tent peg through his head.

23 And that was how God enabled the Israelites that day to defeat the army of Jabin, one of the kings of the Canaanites. **24** The Israelites had become stronger and stronger, and finally they completely defeated the army of Jabin, that Canaanite king.

5 **1** At the time when the Israelites defeated Jabin's army, Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang a song to celebrate. This is the song that they sang:

2 "We should all praise Yahweh for the Israelite men who promised to fight
and who fought willingly.
3 Even the most important people in the world
should pay attention to this!
I am going to sing to Yahweh.
With this song, I will praise Yahweh, the God of Israel.
4 Yahweh, when you came from Seir,
when you marched from that land that people also call Edom,
thunder shook the earth
and clouds poured down rain from the skies.
5 The mountains shook when you came,
just as Mount Sinai shook when you appeared there,
because you are Yahweh,
the God whom we Israelites worship.
6 After our leader Shamgar son of Anath died
and before Jael helped us defeat the army of Jabin,
we Israelites were afraid to walk on the main roads,
because Jabin's soldiers would rob us.
Instead, when our people had to travel,
they used little roads that wound through the countryside.
7 Israelites who lived in small villages left them
and moved into walled cities **for safety**.
But then I, Deborah, became a leader of the Israelite people,
and I protected them just as a mother protects her children.

8 When the Israelite people **abandoned Yahweh** and began to worship different gods,

enemies attacked their cities.

The Israelites **could barely defend themselves**

because they had hardly any weapons.

9 So I am very thankful for the Israelite leaders

and soldiers who willingly fought against Sisera.

We should all praise Yahweh for them!

10 You wealthy people who ride on white donkeys,

sitting on nice, padded saddles,

and you poorer people who just walk on the road,

think about all this!

11 Listen to the songs that people sing at the places along the road where travelers stop to get water.

Those songs tell about how Yahweh acted righteously when he enabled the Israelite warriors to defeat their enemies.

After that, Yahweh's people were able to return safely to their cities.

12 Sing energetically, Deborah! Sing from your own vivid recollections!

Now is the time, Barak son of Abinoam, to show the prisoners that your army captured.

13 The Israelite people who had scattered for safety

came down from the highlands to where their leaders were gathering an army.

These were men who were loyal to Yahweh,

and they came to help me, Barak, fight against the enemy soldiers.

14 Some soldiers came from the tribe of Ephraim. They came from land that had once belonged to the descendants of Amalek.

Soldiers also came from the tribe of Benjamin. They reached the Israelite camp before the ones from Ephraim.

Military leaders from the clan of Machir in the tribe of Manasseh led their troops to fight.

So did officers from the tribe of Zebulun. They carried staffs to indicate their rank.

15 Leaders from the tribe of Issachar brought their soldiers when Deborah told Barak to gather an army.

They fully supported Barak. He led these soldiers down into the valley **to fight Sisera**.

But the men of the tribe of Reuben could not decide what they should do.

16 They should not have stayed away from the battle,

taking care of their sheep and listening to shepherds playing their flutes.

But the men of the tribe of Reuben could not decide what they should do.

17 So the men of all the tribes living in the Gilead area stayed at home, east of the Jordan River.

And the men of the tribe of Dan just kept fishing in the sea **when they should have been helping to fight against Sisera**.

Similarly, the men of the tribe of Asher did not leave their harbors on the seacoast **to come and help fight**.

18 But the soldiers from the tribe of Zebulun risked their lives on the battlefield.

The soldiers from the tribe of Naphtali also risked their lives in order to occupy the high ground on the battlefield.

19 Sisera brought an army of soldiers from many Canaanite kingdoms **that were subject to Jabin** to fight against us.

They fought a battle against us near the city of Taanach.

That city is near the river that flows through the Valley of Megiddo. But **they did not defeat us, and so** they did not carry any valuable things away from the battle.

20 It was as if the stars in the sky fought for us,

and as if those stars fought against Sisera,

as they moved across the sky.

21 The Kishon River, that river that has been there for a long time, was drowning Sisera's soldiers.

So I told myself to be brave and to keep fighting.

22 Then the horses of Sisera's army **ran away from the battle.**

As they ran, they pounded the ground with their hooves.

Those powerful horses kept galloping along.

23 **After the battle,** an angel representing Yahweh said,

'The people who live in the town of Meroz did not help Yahweh by stopping Sisera's army from retreating.

And so you must call for Yahweh to punish them by making bad things happen to them.'

24 But God is very pleased with the woman whose name is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite.

He is more pleased with her than with all the other women who live in tents.

25 Although Sisera only asked for some water, Jael gave him some milk.

She brought him some yogurt in the kind of bowl that rulers have.

26 Then**, when Sisera was asleep,** Jael picked up a tent peg with her left hand and a heavy hammer with her right hand.

She pounded the tent peg into Sisera's head so hard that it went right through his temple. This smashed his head.

27 As Jael stood over him, Sisera died **from the crushing blow to his head**.

He did not even move from where he was when she hit him. He died right there.

28 Sisera's mother looked out through her window

to see whether he was returning from the battle.

She asked, 'Why is he taking so long to come home in his chariot?

Why have I not yet heard his chariot horses pounding the ground with their feet?'

29 Some tactful ladies in her household reassured her,

and she told herself the same thing they told her:

30 'Sisera and his soldiers are probably **late returning because they are** dividing up

the things and the people they captured after the battle.

Each soldier will get one or two women as slaves.

Each of Sisera's soldiers will also get one or two expensive robes that have bright colors and gold thread for decoration.

They will probably wear them home from the battle to show that they won.'

31 **But that is not what happened!**

Yahweh, I hope that all your enemies will die as Sisera did!

And I wish that all those who love you, Yahweh, will be as strong as the sun when it rises!”

After that, the land of Israel was a peaceful place for the next 40 years.

6 **1** But then the Israelites once again did things that Yahweh had said were very wicked. So he allowed the people of Midian to conquer them and rule them for seven years. **2** The people of Midian treated the Israelites so cruelly that they hid from them. The Israelites made places where they could live on mountains, in caves, and in other safe locations. **3** This is what the enemies of the Israelites were doing to them. The Israelites would plant crops in their fields. Once those crops began to grow, enemies from Midian and Amalek and from desert tribes would come into Israel. **4** They set up their tents in the land, and their animals devoured the crops as far south as Gaza. They did not leave anything for the Israelites to eat. They also took away their sheep, cattle, and donkeys. **5** They came into Israel with their tents and their livestock. When they came, there were so many of them that they seemed like a huge swarm of locusts. One could hardly count how many of them arrived riding on their camels. They came into the land of Israel and ruined the land, so that crops could not grow there. **6** The people of Midian took almost everything the Israelites owned. So finally the Israelites pleaded for Yahweh to help them.

7 When the Israelites pleaded with Yahweh to help them because of what the people from Midian were doing to them, **8** Yahweh sent a prophet to them. He told them, “Yahweh is the God we Israelites are supposed to worship. He sent me to tell you, ‘I brought your ancestors out of Egypt. I rescued them from that place where they were slaves. **9** I made the Egyptian rulers who had made them slaves set them free. When you got to this land, I enabled you to defeat your enemies. I forced them to leave, and I allowed you to live here instead. **10** I told your ancestors, “I am Yahweh, the God whom you must worship. Once you Israelites are living in the land that belonged to the Amorites, you must not worship the gods that they worshiped.” But you have disobeyed what I told them.’”

11 One day an angel representing Yahweh came and sat under a big oak tree in the town of Ophrah. That tree belonged to Joash, who was from the clan of Abiezer. Joash's son Gideon was threshing wheat in the pit where they pressed grapes to make wine. He was threshing the grain there because it was a place where the people of Midian could not see him. **12** The angel representing Yahweh went over to Gideon and told him, "You mighty soldier, Yahweh is helping you!"

13 Gideon replied, "Pardon me for asking, sir, but if Yahweh is really helping us, then why have all these bad things happened to us? Yahweh is not doing any miracles for us like the ones that our ancestors have told us about. They have said that he rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. But now Yahweh has abandoned us. He is allowing the people from Midian to rule us."

14 Then Yahweh looked right at him and said, "I have made you strong enough to rescue the Israelites from the people of Midian who are ruling you. So lead an army against them. I am commanding you to do that!"

15 Gideon replied, "I am sorry, sir, but I do not believe that I can rescue the Israelites. This is why I cannot: my clan is the smallest and weakest one in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least important person in my whole family!"

16 Yahweh said to him, "I will help you**, and so you will be able to rescue the Israelites**. I will enable you to defeat the entire Midianite army at one time."

17 Gideon replied, "If you truly are pleased with me, then let me ask you to do something that will prove that you, Yahweh, really are the one who is speaking with me. **18** I would like to go and prepare a special meal and bring it to you. Please do not leave here until I get back."

Yahweh answered, "**I agree.** I will wait here until you come back."

19 So Gideon hurried to his home. He killed a young goat and cooked it. He also took about 22 liters of flour and baked some bread without yeast. Then he put the cooked meat in a basket, and he put the broth from the meat in a pot. He brought the meat and the bread to Yahweh, who was still sitting under the oak tree. Gideon invited him to eat these foods as a special meal.

20 But Yahweh told Gideon, “Put the meat and the bread on this rock. Then pour the broth on top of it.” So that is what Gideon did. **21** Then the angel representing Yahweh reached out and touched the meat and bread with the tip of the walking stick that he was holding. Flames came up from the rock and completely burned up the meat and the bread! And then the angel representing Yahweh disappeared. **22** Then Gideon realized that it had actually been an angel representing Yahweh who had come and spoken with him. He exclaimed, “Oh, no! Yahweh my Lord, I just saw your angel in person! **No one can see you and live, so I am going to die!**”

23 But Yahweh called to him and said, “You are safe. You do not have to be afraid. I am not going to kill you.”

24 Then Gideon built an altar there to worship Yahweh. He gave it the name Yahweh is Peace. That altar is still there at this time in the town of Ophrah in the land that belongs to the Abiezrite clan.

25 Then, that same night, Yahweh told Gideon, “Tear down the altar that your father built to worship the god Baal. Also cut down the pole for worshiping the goddess Asherah that is beside that altar. Use the young bull that your father owns **to pull down the altar**. But also bring another bull with you that your father owns, the one that is seven years old. **26** Build a plain stone altar here on this hill to worship me, your God Yahweh. Take the wood from the Asherah pole that you cut down and use it to make a fire. Then burn the meat of that seven-year-old bull on that fire as a burnt offering to me.”

27 Then Gideon got ten of his servants and together they did what Yahweh had commanded him to do. But he was afraid of what the other members of his family and the other people who lived in the town would do to him if they found out that he had done that. So they did it at night.

28 The next morning, when the people who lived in the town got up, they saw that the altar to Baal was in ruins. The Asherah pole that had been next to it was gone. They saw that there was a new altar on the hill above the town, and on it were the remains of a bull that someone had sacrificed.

29 The people asked each other, “Who did this?” When some of the town leaders investigated, someone finally told them. So they announced publicly, “It was Gideon son of Joash who did this.”

30 The men of the town came to the house of Joash. They told him, “Bring your son out here! We want to kill him to punish him for destroying the altar of our god Baal and for cutting down the Asherah pole where we worship!”

31 But Joash **refused to bring Gideon out. He** told the hostile crowd that had gathered around his house, “You should not have to argue a case on behalf of Baal! You should not have to defend him! Anyone who thinks he needs to defend Baal is the one whom we should execute. In fact, we should execute him right now! If Baal really is a god, he ought to be able to defend himself when someone tears down his altar!” **32** And that was how Gideon got the nickname Jerubbaal**, which means, “Let Baal defend himself.”** People said, “Yes, Baal should be the one to punish this man for tearing down his altar.”

33 Soon after that, the people of Midian and Amalek and the desert tribes that were their allies sent their armies together across the Jordan River to attack the Israelites. Their soldiers set up their camp in the Valley of Jezreel. **34** Then Yahweh’s Spirit gave Gideon special strength and courage. Gideon blew a ram’s horn **to call the people of Israel to join him in fighting against these invaders**. The men from his clan of Abiezer gathered to fight, with him as their commander. **35** Gideon also sent messengers throughout the territory of the tribe of Manasseh to tell its soldiers to come and fight under his command. He also sent messengers throughout the territories of the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and soldiers from those tribes came and joined his army.

36 Then Gideon said to God, “I want to be sure that you are truly going to enable me to rescue the Israelite people as you promised. **37** Please confirm that by doing something for me. Tonight I will put a dry wool fleece on this place where people thresh grain. Tomorrow morning, if only the fleece is wet with dew and the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to enable me to rescue the people of Israel as you promised.” **38** And that is what happened. When Gideon got up the next morning, he picked up the fleece and he squeezed enough dew from it to fill a bowl with water! **But the ground all around the fleece was dry.**

39 Then Gideon said to God, “Please do not be angry with me, but I would like to ask you
to do one more thing. Tonight let me put the fleece out again. This time, please let only the
fleece remain dry, and let the whole ground become wet with dew.” 40 And that night God did
what Gideon had asked him to do. The next morning only the fleece was dry, but the whole
ground was wet with dew.

7 1 So that morning Gideon (whom people were calling Jerubbaal) got up right away and
led all of his soldiers as far as the spring that people would soon call Harod. The army of
Midian had camped north of there, in the valley near the hill of Moreh. 2 Yahweh said to
Gideon, “You have too many soldiers with you. Suppose I allow all of you to fight the army of
Midian and your army defeats them. Then the Israelites will boast that they defeated their
enemies by themselves, without my help. 3 So I want you to make an announcement to the
soldiers. Tell them, ‘Any one of you who is too afraid to fight may leave this army camp and
go home by way of Mount Gilead.’” When Gideon made that announcement, 22,000 of the
soldiers went home. Only 10,000 of them stayed in the camp.

4 But Yahweh told Gideon, “You still have too many soldiers! Take them down to the
spring, and there I will show you which ones to bring. I will tell you which ones to take with
you and which ones not to take with you.”

5 When Gideon took the men down to the spring, Yahweh told him, “Watch how the men
drink. Put in one group the men who scoop up the water with their hands and lick it with their
tongues the way dogs do. Put in another group the men who kneel down and put their faces in
the water to drink.” 6 Now when the soldiers drank, only 300 of them used their hands to bring
water to their mouths. All the others drank by kneeling down and putting their faces in the
water.

7 Then Yahweh told Gideon, “I will use the 300 men who lapped the water from their
hands to rescue Israel! I will enable you to defeat the Midianites. All the others may return to
their homes.” 8 So the 300 soldiers who were staying with Gideon collected the food that the
other men had brought. They also collected the ram’s horns they had brought. Then Gideon
sent those other men home, but he kept the 300 soldiers with him.

The army of Midian was camping in the valley below Gideon and his army. **9** The night after all the other soldiers left, Yahweh said to Gideon, “Now is the time for you to attack the Midianites in the valley! You can be confident that I will enable you and your men to defeat them. **10** But if you are afraid to attack the Midiantes, then go secretly to their camp with Purah, your armor-bearer. **11** Listen to what some of the Midianite soldiers are saying. Then you will be very encouraged, and you will be ready to attack their army.” So Gideon took Purah with him and they went secretly to where sentries were guarding the enemy camp.
12 The armies of the people of Midian and Amalek and the desert tribes that were their allies had set up their tents in the valley. They seemed to have as many soldiers as there are locusts in a swarm. It seemed that their camels were too many to count, like the number of grains of sand on the seashore.

13 But Gideon and Purah crept close to the edge of the camp. There they heard one man telling a friend about a dream. The man said, “I just had a dream, and in it I saw a round loaf of barley bread rolling down into our Midianite camp. When it reached a tent, it hit it so hard that the tent turned upside down and collapsed!”

14 His friend replied, “Your dream can mean only one thing. It means that God is going to enable Gideon son of Joash, that Israelite man, to lead his soldiers to defeat our combined armies from Midian and its allies.”

15 When Gideon heard the man tell about his dream and his friend say what it meant, he thanked God **for the victory that the Israelites were going to win**. Then he and Purah returned to the Israelite camp. Gideon shouted to the men, “Now is the time to attack! Yahweh is going to enable us to defeat the Midianite army!” **16** Gideon then divided his 300 soldiers into three groups. He gave each soldier a ram’s horn **to blow as a trumpet**. He also gave each one a torch and an empty clay jar to cover the torch and hide its light.

17 Then he said to them, “Watch me! When we come close to the enemy camp, **spread out to surround the camp. Then** do exactly what I do. **18** I will be leading one group of soldiers. As soon as we blow our ram’s horns, you men in the other two groups surrounding the camp must blow your horns too. Then shout, ‘We are Yahweh’s army! We are Gideon’s army!’”

19 A new group of guards was just replacing the guards who had been watching the camp since the start of the night. That was when Gideon and the 100 men with him arrived at the

edge of the Midianite camp. They suddenly blew their horns and broke the jars they were carrying. **The torches that had been inside the jars shone brightly.** **20** Then the men in all three groups blew their horns and smashed their jars. They held the torches high with their left hands **so that the light would awaken and frighten the Midianites**. They held up the horns with their right hands and alternately blew them and shouted, “We are Yahweh’s army! We are Gideon’s army!” **21** Each of Gideon’s men stayed in position all around the enemy camp. All of the enemy soldiers started running around and sounding the alarm and trying to escape.

22 While the 300 Israelite men kept blowing their horns, Yahweh caused the Midianites to start fighting each other with their swords. Some of them killed each other. The others ran away. Some fled south to the town of Beth Shittah. Some fled to the town of Zererah. Others ran away as far as the outskirts of the town of Abel Meholah, near the town of Tabbath.
23 Then Gideon sent messengers to the Israelite men who lived in the territories of the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh. The messengers got them to come and help finish defeating the army of Midian. **24** Gideon sent messengers throughout the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lived. The messengers told the men there, “Go down and attack the fleeing Midianite soldiers. So that those soldiers do not escape, put guards at the shallow places where people can wade across rivers and streams. Put guards at the crossings of the streams in the area of Beth Barah and the crossings of the Jordan River.” So the men of Ephraim came and put guards in those places.

25 They also captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two rulers who were commanding the Midianite army. They found Oreb hiding in a cave in a big rock. They killed him there, and that is why people now call it the Rock of Oreb. They found Zeeb hiding in a pit where people press grapes to make wine. They killed him there, and that is why people now call it the Winepress of Zeeb. The Israelites cut off the heads of Oreb and Zeeb so they could bring them to Gideon. They pursued the Midianites across the Jordan River, and they met Gideon there.

8 **1** Then the soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim told Gideon, “You have not treated us fairly! You should have given us the opportunity to help you fight against the army of Midian!” They argued very angrily with Gideon.

2 But Gideon told them, “I have done very little compared with what you have done! It is as if I and my soldiers from the clan of Abiezer and other Israelite tribes harvested a crop of

grapes. And it is as if you soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim came along after us and collected the few grapes that we had left on the vines. And it is as if those few grapes you collected were better than the whole crop that we harvested. **3** God enabled you to capture Oreb and Zeeb, the rulers who were commanding the Midianite army. What you did is much more important than what I was able to do!" After Gideon told them that, they were no longer angry with him.

4 Then Gideon and his 300 men came to the Jordan River and crossed it. They were very tired, but they continued to chase their enemies. **5** When they arrived at the town of Succoth, Gideon said to the town leaders, "Please give my soldiers something to eat. They are tired and hungry, and we are still trying to capture the Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna."

6 But the leaders of Succoth replied, "You have not caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet! So we are not going to give your troops anything to eat."

7 Gideon replied, "Because you have refused to give us food, we will return here after Yahweh enables us to capture Zebah and Zalmunna. We are going to make whips out of the stems of thorny desert plants. Then we are going to use them to whip you and cut you!"

8 Next Gideon and his 300 men went to the town of Penuel and asked for food there. But the town leaders of Penuel also refused to give them anything to eat. **9** So Gideon told the town leaders of Penuel, "I am going to defeat those kings. Then I will come back here and demolish your tower**, which you think is going to protect you**!"

10 By that time, Zebah and Zalmunna had gone to the town of Karkor with 15,000 troops. Those were all who were left of the armies of Midian, Amalek, and the desert tribes that were their allies. Of their fighting men, 120,000 had already died. **11** Gideon and his men took the road through the wilderness on which caravans travel. This took them east of the villages of Nobah and Jogbehah. The Midianite soldiers were feeling safe out in the wilderness, so Gideon was able to attack them by surprise. **12** When Gideon and his soldiers attacked, the Midianite army panicked and ran away. Zebah and Zalmunna tried to escape, but Gideon and his soldiers chased them. And they captured those two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna.

13 After that, Gideon the son of Joash and his men **took Zebah and Zalmunna with them** and started to return home. They went through the Ascent of Heres. **14** Gideon was able to capture a young man who lived in Succoth. Gideon made him tell him who were all the leaders

and elders of the town. The young man wrote down the names of all 77 of those men. **15** Then Gideon and his men went into Succoth and said to those leaders, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna! When we were here before, you made fun of me. You said ‘You have not caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet! So we are not going to give your hungry troops anything to eat.’” **16** Then Gideon and his men grabbed the town leaders. They made whips from the stems of thorny desert plants, and they whipped the town leaders with them. They did that to punish the leaders for not giving them food. **17** Then Gideon and his men went to the town of Penuel. They tore down the tower and killed men in that town.

18 Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “You and your soldiers killed some men near Mount Tabor. Tell me about those men.”

They replied, “They looked like you. They all looked like royal princes.”

19 Gideon replied, “Those men were my own brothers! I swear by Yahweh that I would spare your lives now if you had spared their lives then.” **20** Then Gideon turned to his oldest son, Jether. He told him, “Now you kill these two kings!” But Jether was still only a boy, so he was afraid. So he did not pull out his sword to kill them.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, “Do not ask a boy to do the work that a man should do! You kill us yourself.” So Gideon killed both of them. Then he took the golden crescent-shaped ornaments that their camels were wearing.

22 Then the soldiers whom Gideon had led into battle told him, “You should be our king! In fact, we want you and your son and your grandson to be our kings. That is because you rescued us from the Midianites who were oppressing us.”

23 But Gideon told them, “No, I will not be your king. My son will not be your king either. Yahweh is your real king.” **24** But he added, “There is one thing that I would like you to do for me. Would each of you please give me one earring from the things you captured after the battle?” (The Midianite soldiers were descendants of Ishmael, and it was their custom to wear golden earrings.)

25 They replied, “We will each be glad to give an earring to you!” So they spread out a large garment on the ground. Then each man threw a gold earring onto it from the things he

had taken from the enemy soldiers he had killed in the battle. **26** The golden earrings that Gideon received weighed a total of over 20 kilograms. That weight did not include some other things that Gideon received. He also received gold, jewels, and luxurious purple robes that the Midianite kings had been wearing and gold chains that had been around their camels' necks. **27** Gideon used the gold to make a sacred garment. He set it up in his hometown of Ophrah. The people of Israel started going there to worship it, instead of worshiping only Yahweh. Gideon and his family had great trouble because of this.

28 So that is the story of how the Israelites defeated the army of Midian. The people of Midian did not become strong enough to attack Israel again. So while Gideon was alive, Israel was a peaceful place for 40 years.

29 Then Gideon son of Joash, whom people also called Jerubbaal, went back home to live there. **30** Gideon had many full legal wives, and they bore him 70 sons. **31** Gideon also had a secondary wife in the city of Shechem. She too bore him a son, and Gideon named him Abimelech. **32** Gideon son of Joash lived for a long time. When he died, his family buried his body in the burial ground that his father Joash owned. This was in the town of Ophrah in the territory that belonged to the clan of Abiezer.

33 But as soon as Gideon died, the Israelites were unfaithful to Yahweh. They once again worshiped idols that represented gods such as Baal. They made an idol that they called Baal-Berith, and they worshiped it as their god. **34** The enemy nations that surrounded the Israelites had conquered them. Yahweh their God had rescued the Israelites from their control. But they were not grateful for this. **35** Gideon, whom people also called Jerubbaal, had done many good things for the Israelites. But they did not act kindly toward his family.

9 **1** Gideon's son Abimelech went to talk with his mother's brothers in the city of Shechem. He spoke to them and to all his mother's relatives. He said, **2** "I want you to gather all the leaders of Shechem. Tell them, 'It would not be good to have all 70 of Gideon's sons rule over us. It would be better to have only one man, Abimelech, rule over us.' And do not forget that I am a part of your family!"

3 So Abimelech's mother's brothers gathered all the leaders of Shechem. They told them everything that Abimelech wanted them to say. The leaders decided to allow Abimelech to rule

over them, considering that he was their relative. **4** So the leaders of Shechem took about a kilogram of silver from the temple of their god Baal-Berith and gave it to Abimelech. He used that money to hire some wicked and violent men. They did whatever he told them to do.
5 Abimelech and the men he had hired went to Ophrah, his father's town. There they murdered his 70 brothers, the sons of his father Gideon. They brought each one of them to a huge rock and killed him there. But Gideon's youngest son Jotham escaped because he hid from Abimelech and his men. **6** Then all the town leaders of Shechem and the officers from the nearby fort gathered next to the pillar under the big sacred tree at Shechem. There they appointed Abimelech to be their king.

7 When Jotham heard about that, he climbed high up on Mount Gerizim. From where he was standing, he shouted very loudly to the people below, "You leaders of Shechem, pay attention to what I say, or God will not answer your prayers! **8** One day the trees decided to choose one tree to be their king. First they told the olive tree, 'We would like you to be our king.'

9 But the olive tree replied, 'I produce olives, and people make oil from them. They put the oil in sacrifices that they offer, and they use it to anoint people whom they want to honor. It is much more important for me to keep producing olives than to wander around settling matters for other trees as a king would do. **So I will not be your king.**'

10 So the trees told the fig tree, 'Then we want you to be our king!'

11 But the fig tree replied, 'I produce figs. They are good to eat, and they taste sweet. It is much more important for me to keep producing figs than to wander around settling matters for other trees as a king would do. **So I will not be your king.**'

12 So the trees told the grapevine, 'Then we want you to be our king!'

13 But the grapevine replied, 'I produce grapes, and people produce new wine from them. That new wine causes gods and people to be happy. It is much more important for me to keep producing grapes than to wander around settling matters for other trees as a king would do. **So I will not be your king.**'

14 So all of the trees finally told the thornbush, 'Then we want you to be our king!'

15 The thornbush said to the trees, ‘If you sincerely want to appoint me to be your king,
then accept my protection and obey my commands. But be sure that you are sincere, because if
you do not obey me, then I will start a fire that will burn up all of you, even the biggest trees,
such as the cedar trees in the country of Lebanon!’”

16 After Jotham finished telling them this parable, he said, “Now you must consider
whether you have truly done the right thing by making Abimelech your king. You must
consider whether you have treated Gideon and his family properly. You must consider whether
you have treated him the way he deserved for what he did. 17 Remember what my father did
for you. He led the Israelites into battle against the Midianites. He was willing to die if
necessary to rescue you from their power. 18 But now you have rebelled against my father’s
family. You have murdered 70 of his sons on one huge rock. And you have appointed
Abimelech to be the king who will rule you people of Shechem. **You think he will treat you well**
because he is your relative. **But he has no right to be a king, since** he is only the son of my
father’s slave girl, not of one of his full legal wives. 19 Now if you truly have done the right
thing toward Gideon and his family, then may you now be happy that Abimelech is your king,
and may he also be happy that you are his subjects. 20 But if what you did was not right, then I
hope that Abimelech destroys you leaders of Shechem and you officers from the fort, and I
hope that you destroy him!”

21 After Jotham finished saying all of this, the leaders of Shechem tried to capture him, but
he got away from them. He ran away to the town of Beer. He stayed there so that his half-
brother Abimelech would not be able to kill him.

22 For the next three years, Abimelech ruled as the king of the city of Shechem. Many
Israelites also accepted him as their king. 23 Then God made Abimelech and the leaders of
Shechem hostile toward each other. The leaders of Shechem started plotting against
Abimelech. 24 The 70 sons of Jerubbaal were Abimelech’s half-brothers, but he hired men to
kill them. The leaders of Shechem gave him the money to have men kill his half-brothers. **So**
God made them enemies so that they would suffer violently, just as they had caused others to
suffer violently. God did this to punish them for the murders they had committed. 25 The
leaders of Shechem decided not to rely on Abimelech anymore. Instead, they had some of their
men hide up high on the hills around the city. **From there these men could see travelers**

approaching, and they surprised them and robbed them when they got close. Abimelech heard about what they were doing.

26 Then Gaal son of Ebed moved into the city of Shechem along with a group of men he commanded. The leaders of Shechem liked him and welcomed him. **27** Then the people who lived in Shechem went out to their vineyards to pick some grapes. They pressed the grapes to make juice, and from the juice they made wine. They brought some of the wine as an offering into the temple of their god Baal-Berith. There they had a big feast and drank a lot of wine. Then they started cursing Abimelech. **28** Gaal son of Ebed said, "We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us! His mother was from Shechem, but his father was Jerubbaal, an Israelite. So he is not really one of us! We should not allow Zebul to rule over us either, since it was Abimelech who appointed him as governor of our city. Instead, our ruler should be one of the descendants of Hamor, who founded our city of Shechem. We should not be allowing a foreigner like Abimelech to rule us. **29** If you appoint me to be your leader, I will make Abimelech stop being your leader." Then Gaal boasted that he would not be afraid to fight Abimelech and his whole army.

30 When Zebul, the governor of Shechem, heard Gaal son of Ebed talking about Abimelech this way, he became very angry. **31** But Zebul did not show that he was angry. He sent messengers to warn Abimelech, but he pretended he was sending them for some other reason. The messengers told Abimelech, "Be careful! A certain man, Gaal son of Ebed, has brought a group of men that he commands to Shechem. You need to know that they are getting the people who live in Shechem to rebel against you. **32** So you and your troops should come here at night, when no one will see you, and hide in the area outside the city. **33** That way, in the morning, as soon as it becomes light, you can immediately attack the city. Gaal and his men will surely come out of the city to fight against you, and when they do, you can do whatever you want to him."

34 So Abimelech and all of his troops got up during the night. They divided into four groups and hid in the fields near Shechem. **35** The next morning, Gaal went out and stood at the city gate. While he was standing there, Abimelech and his soldiers came out of their hiding places and started coming toward him.

36 When Gaal saw the soldiers, he said to Zebul, “Look! There is a group of people coming down from the hills!”

But Zebul said, “You are just seeing the shadow that one hill casts on another as the sun gets higher in the sky. That dark shape is not a group of people. It only looks like one.” **37** But Gaal **kept watching and** spoke again. He said to Zebul, “Look! I do see groups of people coming down that central hill! I also see a group coming towards us along the road that goes past the Oak of the Diviners.”

38 Then Zebul said to Gaal, “Earlier you spoke boastfully. You said, ‘We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us!’ That is who you see coming: the army that you said you could easily defeat. So now that they are here, go out and fight them!”

39 So Gaal and his men went out of the city and fought against the army of Abimelech. The leaders of Shechem were watching **to see what would happen**. **40** Abimelech and his men **defeated them and** chased them when they ran away. They stabbed and killed many of Gaal’s men all the way back to the city gate of Shechem. **41** Abimelech then went to the nearby town of Arumah. Zebul forced Gaal and the group of men he commanded to leave Shechem, where they had been living.

42 Then, the next day, the people of Shechem were getting ready to leave the city and go out and work in their fields. Someone told Abimelech what they were going to do. **43** So Abimelech divided his men into three groups and had them hide in the fields around Shechem. Then, once they saw that the people were out in the fields away from the city, they got up and attacked them. **44** When Abimelech and his soldiers came out of hiding, he and one group of them ran to the city gate **and blocked it**. The other two groups of soldiers ran out to the fields and killed the people of Shechem who were there. **45** Abimelech and his soldiers fought against the people of Shechem all that day. When they finally conquered the city, they killed all the people who lived there. They tore down all of the buildings. Then they threw salt over the ruins to show that they never wanted anyone to live there again.

46 A group of soldiers lived in a fortress near Shechem that had a defensive tower. When their commanders heard what had happened, all of them went inside the fortress, which was also a temple of their god El-Berith. **47** Somebody told Abimelech that the commanders of the

fortress near Shechem had all gone inside it. **48** So Abimelech and all of his soldiers went onto the slopes of **nearby** Mount Zalmon. They brought axes with them. Abimelech cut a large branch from a tree and put it on his shoulder. He told all of his soldiers, "Quickly, all of you cut branches as you just saw me do!" **49** So each one of the soldiers also cut a branch, **and they carried them down the mountain,** following Abimelech. They went to the fortress and piled the branches against its walls. Then they set the branches on fire. About 1,000 men and women were inside the tower near Shechem. The fire burned up the fortress and killed all of them too.

50 After that, Abimelech and his soldiers went to the town of Thebez**, whose people had also rebelled against him**. They surrounded it and conquered it. **51** But the people of that city had built a tower where they would be safe if someone attacked them. Many men and women from the city, including its leaders, ran to the tower. Once they were inside, they locked the door. Then they climbed up to the roof of the tower. **52** Abimelech and his soldiers came to the tower to try to kill the people who were in it. Abimelech went right up to the tower to start a fire that would burn it down. **53** But when Abimelech came near the tower, a woman who was on the roof dropped a large grinding stone on his head. It cracked the bone of his skull.

54 The servant who was carrying Abimelech's weapons was nearby. Abimelech quickly ordered him, "Pull out your sword and kill me with it! I do not want people to say about me, 'A woman killed Abimelech.'" So the servant stabbed Abimelech with his sword, and that killed him. **55** When the Israelite soldiers saw that Abimelech was dead, they all returned to their homes.

56 In that way, God punished Abimelech for murdering all 70 of his brothers. When Abimelech did that, he did a wicked thing to his father. **57** God also punished the people of Shechem for all the wicked things that they had done. Jotham son of Gideon had said that Abimelech would destroy them, and that is what happened.

10 **1** After Abimelech died, Tola, the son of Puah and grandson of Dodo became a leader. He rescued the Israelites from their enemies. He belonged to the tribe of Issachar. However, he lived in the town of Shamir in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim live. **2** Tola was the leader of the Israelites for 23 years. When he died, his family buried him in Shamir.

3 After Tola died, Jair from the region of Gilead became a leader. He was the leader of the Israelites for 22 years. **4** He had 30 sons, and he gave each of them his own donkey to ride on. They lived in 30 cities in the region of Gilead. People still call those cities Havvoth Jair.
5 When Jair died, his family buried him in the town of Kamon.

6 Once again the Israelites did things that Yahweh said were very wicked. They worshiped various idols that represented gods such as Baal. They also worshiped female fertility goddesses such as Ashtoreth. They also worshiped the gods that people worshiped in the countries of Aram and Moab and in the city of Sidon. And they worshiped the gods that the Ammonites and Philistines worshiped. But they did not worship Yahweh at all anymore. **7** So Yahweh became very angry with the Israelites, and he allowed the Philistines and Ammonites to conquer them. **8** For 18 years, the Amorites had already been oppressing all the people of Israel who lived in the area east of the Jordan River. That land formerly belonged to the Amorites. (People also call it Gilead.) But now they began to oppress all of the Israelites severely. **9** The Ammonites crossed over the Jordan River and also fought against the people of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. They made the Israelites suffer terribly. **10** So the Israelites prayed desperately to Yahweh. They said, "We have sinned against you. We have stopped worshiping you, and instead we have been worshiping idols representing false gods such as Baal."

11 Yahweh answered them, saying, "**In the past,** the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites, Philistines, **12** Sidonians, Amalekites, and Maonites were treating you badly. You prayed desperately to me, and I rescued you from them. **13** But even after that, you stopped worshiping me. You worshiped other gods instead. So I am not going to keep rescuing you.
14 See whether the gods you are worshiping can rescue you now that you are in trouble again!"

15 But the people of Israel said to Yahweh, "We confess that we have sinned. Punish us in whatever way you wish. But please rescue us now!" **16** Then the Israelites threw away the idols that represented the foreign gods they had been worshiping. They worshiped Yahweh instead. Yahweh saw that they were suffering greatly. He felt compassion for them and decided to help them.

17 Ammonite soldiers gathered to fight against the Israelites. They set up their tents in the
region of Gilead. So the Israelite soldiers gathered to fight against them. They set up their tents
near the city of Mizpah. 18 The leaders of the people of Gilead said to each other, "Who will
lead our attack against the Ammonite army? If someone will do that, we will make him the
leader of everyone who lives in the region of Gilead."

11 1 There was a man from the region of Gilead whose name was Jephthah. He was a
great soldier. But his mother was a prostitute. His father was a man whose name was Gilead.
2 Gilead also had a legal wife who gave birth to several sons. When they became adults, they
forced Jephthah to leave. They told him, "You are not the son of our father's legal wife, so you
have no right to inherit any of his property." 3 So Jephthah ran away from his brothers. He
settled in the region of Tob. He attracted a group of lawless men, and they went out raiding
together.

4 Some time later, the soldiers of the Ammon people group attacked the people of Israel.
5 The Israelites needed someone to lead their soldiers to fight against the Ammonites. So the
leaders of the region of Gilead went to the land of Tob. They wanted to bring Jephthah back to
be their commander. 6 They said to him, "Come back with us and lead our army. That way we
will be able to defeat the Ammonite army."

7 But Jephthah told the leaders of Gilead, "You rejected me! You let my brothers force me
to leave home without any inheritance! So you should not come and expect me to help you now
that you are in trouble."

8 The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is exactly why we are coming to you now,
because we are in trouble. Come back with us and lead our soldiers against the Ammonite army.
If you do, we will make you the leader over everyone who lives in Gilead."

9 Jephthah answered them, "So if I go back to Gilead with you to fight against the army of
Ammon, and if Yahweh helps us to defeat them, then I will be your leader."

10 The leaders of Gilead told Jephthah, "We swear that we will do what you have just
described. Yahweh is a witness of the promises we are making to you. May he punish us if we
do not keep those promises!" 11 So Jephthah went with the leaders back to Gilead. In a

religious gathering at Mizpah, Jephthah repeated to Yahweh the terms of the agreement they had made. Then the people appointed him to be their leader and the commander of their army.

12 Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites. They asked the king, "What have we done to make you angry, so that your army has invaded our land to fight against us?"

13 The Ammonite king replied to Jephthah's messengers, "I am invading because you Israelites took our land when you came here from Egypt. You took all of our land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north. So now give it back to us without a fight."

14 But Jephthah sent his messengers back to the Ammonite king. **15** They said to him, "Jephthah told us to tell you: 'Israel did not take any land that belonged to the Moabites or the Ammonites. **16** Here is what actually happened. When the Israelite people came out of Egypt, they walked through the desert to the Sea of Reeds. From there they traveled to the town of Kadesh at the border of the region of Edom. **17** From there the Israelites sent messengers to the king of the Edomites. They asked him, "Please allow us to walk across your land." But the king of the Edomites refused. When they sent the same message to the king of the Moabites, he also refused to allow them to go through his land. So the Israelites stayed at Kadesh for a long time. **18** Then the Israelites went into the desert and walked outside the borders of Edom and Moab. They stayed to the east of Moab, and they did not set up their camp until they were north of the Arnon River. That means that they never went into the territory of Moab, since the Arnon River is the northern border of Moab.

19 Then the leaders of Israel sent a message to the king of the Amorites. His name was Sihon. He ruled in the city of Heshbon. They asked him, "Please allow us Israelite people to cross through your land so we may go into the land that is ours." **20** But Sihon thought that if he allowed the Israelites to come into his land, they would try to conquer it. So he gathered his whole army. His soldiers set up their tents at the town of Jahaz. From there, they attacked the Israelite people. **21** But Yahweh, the God of Israel, made the Israelite army stronger than the army of Sihon. So the Israelites destroyed that enemy army. Then they took possession of all the land where those Amorites had lived. **22** Yes, the Israelites took all the land that belonged to those Amorites. It extended from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and from the desert in the east to the Jordan River in the west.

23 So it was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who forced the Amorites to leave the land in which they were living. Yahweh allowed the Israelites to live there instead. So you cannot claim that land as if it belonged to you. **24** You have the right to live in any land that your god Chemosh may give to you. But Yahweh our God forced others to leave this entire land so that we could live in it. And we are going to keep living in it! **25** You are not greater than Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab. He never disputed that this land now belonged to the Israelites. He never fought against the Israelites to try to take the land from them**, even though it once belonged to the Moabites and Ammonites**. **26** The Israelites have been living for the past 300 years in the city of Heshbon and the town of Aroer and in the villages around them. They have also been living in settlements along the Arnon River. But during all of that time, you Ammonites have not tried to capture those areas for yourselves. **27** So we Israelites have not harmed you **by taking any land from you**. But you Ammonites are doing something bad to us by attacking us **to try to conquer our land**. Yahweh **our God** makes sure that people treat each other properly. If we fight, he will enable our Israelite army to defeat your Ammonite army, because we have done what is right and you are doing what is wrong.'"

28 But even though Jephthah sent him this message, the king of Ammon did not command his army to stop fighting against the Israelites.

29 Then the Spirit of Yahweh gave Jephthah special strength and courage. He went through the region of Gilead and through the area east of the Jordan River where the tribe of Manasseh lived **to enlist men for his army**. He brought all those soldiers to the city of Mizpah in Gilead**, where some of the Israelites had already gathered**. From there, they would go to fight against the Ammonites. **30** There Jephthah made a solemn promise to Yahweh. He said, "If you will enable my army to defeat the Ammonites, **31** when I return safely from defeating the Ammonites, then I will devote to you the first person who comes out of my house to greet me. I will sacrifice that person by burning him up completely on an altar."

32 Then Jephthah and his soldiers went from Mizpah to attack the Ammonites. Yahweh enabled his army to defeat them. **33** Jephthah and his men defeated the Ammonites at the town of Aroer. Then they pursued them all the way to the area around the city of Minnith. They destroyed 20 settlements, as far as the city of Abel Keramim. The Israelites killed a very great number of Ammonites. After that the Ammonites could no longer oppose the Israelites.

34 When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, his daughter was the first one to come out of the house to meet him. She was joyfully playing a tambourine and dancing. Since he had no other sons or daughters, she was his only child. **35** When Jephthah saw his daughter, he tore his clothes to show that he was very sad about what he thought he had to do. He said to her, "Oh, no! My daughter, you have made me terribly distressed **by being the first one to greet me**. You are troubling me just as the Ammonites did. I made a solemn promise to Yahweh **to sacrifice the first person who came out of my house**, and I have to do what I promised."

36 His daughter said, "Father, you made a solemn promise to Yahweh. So you must do to me what you promised, because you said that you would do that if Yahweh helped you to defeat your enemies, the Ammonites." **37** But then she asked him, "Please do something for me first. Do not offer me as a sacrifice right away. Let me go into the hills and wander around with my friends for two months. Let me grieve with them the fact that I will never get married and have children."

38 Jephthah told her, "You may go." And he let her leave for two months. So she and her friends wandered in the hills, and they all cried for her because she would never get married and have children. **39** After two months, she returned to her father Jephthah, and he did to her what he had solemnly promised. So his daughter never married.

Because of that, the Israelites now have a custom. **40** The young Israelite women go into the hills for four days each year. There they sadly remember what happened to the daughter of Jephthah from the region of Gilead.

12 **1** The men of the tribe of Ephraim got ready for battle. They crossed the Jordan River and went northeast to where Jephthah was. They said to Jephthah, "You should not have gone to fight the Ammonites without asking us to help you. We will burn down your house with you inside it!"

2 Jephthah replied to them, "My people and I were in a big fight with the Ammonites. I called for you to help me against them, but you did not come. **3** When I saw that you would not help me, I risked my own life and led my men against the Ammonites. Yahweh helped me defeat them. So you should not have come to fight against me today!"

4 The Ephraimites insulted the Gileadites. They said, “You Gileadites are just runaway people from Ephraim. You live between Ephraim and Manasseh.” **Because the Ephraimites insulted them,** Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead. They fought against the men of Ephraim and defeated them. **5** The men of Gilead blocked the places where people could cross the Jordan River. They did this to stop the Ephraimites from escaping. Some of the soldiers from Ephraim tried to cross the river. The men of Gilead asked everyone who wanted to cross, “Are you from the tribe of Ephraim?” If a man said “No,” **6** the men of Gilead would tell him, “Say the word ‘Shibboleth.’” The Ephraimites could not pronounce that word correctly. They would say “Sibboleth” instead. When they said that, the men of Gilead knew they were from Ephraim. Then they would catch them and kill them at the river crossing. At that time they killed 42,000 people from the tribe of Ephraim. **7** Jephthah, who came from the region of Gilead, led the people of Israel for six years. Then he died. People buried him in one of the towns of Gilead.

8 After Jephthah died, a man whose name was Ibzan became the next leader of Israel. Ibzan was from the town of Bethlehem. **9** Ibzan had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He let all his daughters marry men from other clans. He brought in 30 young women from other clans to marry his sons. Ibzan led Israel for seven years. **10** Then Ibzan died, and people buried him in the town of Bethlehem.

11 After Ibzan died, a man whose name was Elon became the next leader of Israel. Elon was from the tribe of Zebulun. He led Israel for ten years. **12** Then Elon the Zebulunite died. People buried him in the town of Aijalon. That town was in the territory that belonged to the tribe of Zebulun.

13 After Elon died, a man whose name was Abdon became the next leader of Israel. Abdon was the son of Hillel. He came from the town of Pirathon. **14** Abdon had 40 sons and 30 grandsons. He was rich enough to buy donkeys for all of them to ride. Abdon led Israel for eight years. **15** Then Abdon son of Hillel died, and people buried him in his home town of Pirathon. This town was in the territory that belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. It was in the hill country where the Amalekite people used to live.

13 1 The Israelites again did what Yahweh had said was wicked. So Yahweh allowed the Philistines to rule over them for 40 years.

2 There was a man whose name was Manoah who lived in the town of Zorah. He belonged to the tribe of Dan. His wife could not have children. 3 One day, an angel representing Yahweh appeared to Manoah's wife. The angel told her, "Please pay attention to this. You have not been able to have children. But you will soon become pregnant and have a son. 4 Please make sure that from now until he is born, you do not drink any wine or beer. Also, do not eat any food that God has said is unclean. 5 You must do this because you are going to become pregnant and have a son **who must not drink or eat these things**. You must dedicate him to God as a Nazirite as soon as you give birth to him. Therefore you must never cut his hair. He will begin to stop the Philistines from ruling the Israelites."

6 The woman ran and told her husband, "A man from God came to me. He looked like an angel from God. Looking at him made me afraid. I did not ask where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. 7 But he told me, 'Pay attention to this. You will become pregnant and have a son. From now until he is born, do not drink any wine or beer. Do not eat any food that God has said is unclean. You must do this because you are to dedicate your son to God as a Nazirite as soon as you give birth to him. He must continue to be a Nazirite for his entire life.'"

8 Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh, "Please, Lord, let the man you sent who looked like an angel come back to us. We want him to teach us how to raise the son my wife will have."

9 God did what Manoah asked. The angel representing God came again to the woman while she was out working in the field. But her husband Manoah was not with her. 10 The woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Listen to this! The man who appeared to me the other day has come back!"

11 Manoah went out with his wife right away. When he came to the man, he asked him, "Are you the one who talked to my wife?" The man replied, "Yes, I am."

12 Manoah asked him, "When what you have said comes true, what rules should the boy follow? What work should he do?"

13 The angel representing Yahweh said to Manoah, “Your wife must be careful to do everything I told her. **14** She must not eat any grapes or raisins or drink grape juice. She must not drink any wine or beer. And she must not eat any food that God has said is unclean. She must obey everything I have told her.”

15 Manoah said to the angel, “Please stay here for a while. We would like to prepare a young goat for you to eat.”

16 The angel replied, “All right, I will stay, but I will not eat a meal. If you want to prepare something, you should offer it as a burnt offering to Yahweh.” Now Manoah did not realize that this was an angel representing Yahweh.

17 Then Manoah asked the angel, “What is your name? We want to honor you when what you have said comes true.”

18 The angel told him, “You should not ask me my name. It is a mysterious name that I do not tell other people.” **19** Then Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock to Yahweh. As Manoah and his wife were watching, the angel did something amazing. **20** As the flame went up from the altar toward the sky, the angel went up in the flame. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they knelt down and put their faces to the ground **as an act of humble worship**. **21** The angel did not appear to Manoah and his wife again. Then Manoah realized that the angel had been representing Yahweh.

22 Manoah said to his wife, “We have seen God, so we are going to die!”

23 But his wife said to him, “If Yahweh had wanted to kill us, he would not have accepted our burnt offering and grain offering **to show that he is pleased with us**. He also would not have done this remarkable sign for us. And he would not have told us that we were going to have a baby even before I conceived him and gave birth to him.”

24 Then the woman did have a son**, just as the angel had said**. She named him Samson. As the boy was growing up, Yahweh did good things for him **to show that he was going to use him to help the Israelites**. **25** Samson went to live in the town of Mahaneh Dan, between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol. There the Spirit of Yahweh began to make him want to stop the Philistines from ruling the Israelites.

14 **1** Samson went to the town of Timnah. There he saw a young Philistine woman.

2 Samson went back home and told his parents, “I saw a young Philistine woman in Timnah. I want you to arrange for me to marry her.”

3 His parents said to him, “There are many young women in our own tribe of Dan and among our people of Israel. You can marry one of them. You should not marry someone from a people group that does not worship Yahweh.”

But Samson told his father, “No, I like her very much, and so I want you to arrange for me to marry her.” **4** His parents did not know that Yahweh wanted this to happen. Yahweh was looking for a way to act against the Philistines because they were oppressing Israel at that time.
5 Samson went to Timnah with his parents. As they came near the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion attacked Samson **as he was walking alone**. **6** The Spirit of Yahweh gave Samson great strength. He ripped the lion apart with his bare hands as easily as if it had been a young goat. But he did not tell his parents what he had done. **7** When they arrived in Timnah, Samson talked with the young woman, and he liked her very much. **So his father made arrangements for the wedding.**

8 Later, Samson went back to marry her. On the way, he went to look at the dead lion. He saw that a swarm of bees had made a nest in the lion’s body and produced some honey.
9 Samson scooped out some of the honey with his hands. He ate some as he walked along. When he came to his parents, he gave them some, and they ate it too. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s body.

10 Samson’s father went to arrange the marriage with the woman’s family. Samson gave a feast for the young men in that area. That was what young men did when they married someone. **11** The family of the woman saw that Samson had not brought any other young men with him. So they had 30 of their own young men accompany him at the feast.

12 Samson said to them, “Let me tell you a riddle. If you can answer it during the seven days of the feast, I will give you 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothes. **13** But if you can not answer it, then you must give me 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothes.” They told him, “**We agree.** Tell us your riddle, and we will try to solve it.”

14 He said to them,

"Something to eat came out of something that eats.
Something sweet came out of something strong."

They tried for three days to solve the riddle, but they could not.

15 On the last day of the feast, they said to Samson's bride, "Get the answer to the riddle for us from your bridegroom. If you do not, we will burn you and your family to death. We did not come to this feast to become poor!"

16 So Samson's bride went to him and started crying. She shouted, "You hate me! You do not love me! You told a riddle to my relatives, but you did not tell me the answer."

Samson said to her, "I have not even told the answer to my parents. So I am not going to tell you." **17** But she kept crying for the rest of the feast. Finally, as it was about to end, he told her the answer to the riddle because she had kept bothering him. She went and told the answer to the Philistine young men.

18 Before sunset on the last day of the feast, the Philistine guests said to Samson,

"The sweet thing was honey,
and the strong thing was a lion!"

Samson said to them, "You must have gotten the answer from my bride! Otherwise, you could not have solved my riddle!"

19 Then the Spirit of Yahweh gave Samson great strength. He went to the city of Ashkelon and killed 30 men there. He took their clothes and gave them to the men who had answered his riddle. But he was very angry about what had happened. He went back to his father's house without marrying the woman. **20** So her father had her marry instead the Philistine young man who had been a special helper to Samson at the wedding feast.

15 **1** Some time later, during the wheat harvest, Samson visited the woman he was supposed to marry. He brought a young goat as a gift. He told her father that he wanted to sleep with her **to make their marriage official**. But her father would not let him do that.

2 Her father told him, “I honestly thought that you hated her. So I had her marry the young man who was your helper at the wedding feast. But her younger sister is even prettier. You can marry her instead.”

3 Samson refused, and he said to everyone who was listening, “Now I have a good reason to hurt the Philistines!” **4** Then Samson went out into the fields and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs. He got some torches, and he put a torch between each pair of tails. **5** He lit the torches and let the foxes run through the Philistines’ fields. The fire burned the grain they had harvested and the grain that was still in the fields. It also burned their olive trees.

6 The Philistine leaders asked, “Who did this?” Someone told them, “Samson did it. He was supposed to marry the daughter of a man who lived in the town of Timnah. But that man had his daughter marry Samson’s best man instead.” In revenge, the Philistines went and killed Samson’s fiancée and her father by burning them.

7 Samson found out that they had done that. He told them, “Because you killed my bride and her father, I am going to avenge their deaths. But I will do no more than that.” **8** Samson attacked the Philistines furiously and killed many of them. Then he went and hid in a cave in the rock of Etam.

9 Then many Philistine soldiers came and set up camp in the territory of Judah. There were so many of them that their camp covered a large area near the town that people later called Lehi. **10** The men of Judah asked them, “Why have you come to fight us?”

The Philistines answered, “We have come to capture Samson. He killed many of us, and so we are going to kill him.”

11 Then 3,000 men from Judah went to the cave in the rock of Etam where Samson was hiding. They said to Samson, “The Philistines rule over us. You should have known not to upset them. You have caused much trouble for us.”

Samson answered, “They killed my fiancée and her father, so I killed some of them.”

12 The men of Judah told Samson, “We have come to tie you up. We are going to give you to the Philistines.”

Samson said to them, “Promise me that you will not kill me yourselves.”

13 They answered, “We will only tie you up and give you to the Philistines. We will not kill you.” So they tied him with two new ropes and led him away from the rock. **14** When Samson came to the town of Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. Then the Spirit of Yahweh gave Samson great strength. His arms became so strong that he was able to break the rope around them as if it were weak thread. He also easily broke the rope that was around his hands. **15** Then Samson saw a donkey’s jawbone lying on the ground. It was new, so it was hard. He picked it up and used it to kill 1,000 men. **16** Then Samson made up this poem:

“With a donkey’s jawbone,
I have made piles of bodies.
With a donkey’s jawbone,
I have killed 1,000 men.”

17 After Samson finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone. He named that place Ramath Lehi.

18 Samson was very thirsty. He called out to Yahweh, “You have given me this great victory. But now I am afraid that I will die of thirst. Then the Philistines, who do not worship you, will take my body and treat it shamefully!” **19** Then God split open a hollow place in Lehi. Water came out of it. When Samson drank some of that water, he felt strong again. So he named that spring En Hakkore. It is still in Lehi today.

20 Samson was the leader of Israel for 20 years. But during that time, the Philistines were in control of the land of Israel.

16

1 Samson later went to the city of Gaza. He saw a prostitute there, and he had sexual relations with her **and then stayed in her room**. **2** People told the leaders of the Gazites, “Samson has come inside our city!” So the leaders sent men to surround the place where Samson was. They waited there secretly all night. The leaders also put guards at the city gate. But they did not try to capture Samson that night. They decided that once day came, **they would be able to see clearly** to catch him and kill him.

3 But Samson did not stay where he was all night. At midnight, he got up. He went to the city gate to leave the city, but he found that it was barred shut. So he lifted the entire gate up out of the ground, the doors and their posts and the bar. He carried all of this on his shoulders uphill for many miles, all the way to the top of the hill near the town of Hebron.

4 Later Samson fell in love with a woman who lived in the Valley of Sorek. Her name was Delilah. 5 The Philistine leaders came to her and said, "See if you can get Samson to tell you what makes him so strong. See if you can find out how we can capture him and tie him up so that he cannot get away. If you do that, each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver."

6 So Delilah told Samson, "I want you to explain to me what makes you so strong. Tell me how anyone could ever tie you up to capture you."

7 Samson replied, "If someone ties me with seven new bowstrings, ones that are not dry yet, I will have only the strength of an ordinary person."

8 So Delilah told this to the Philistine leaders, and they brought her seven new bowstrings. When Samson fell asleep, she used them to tie him up. 9 Some men were hiding in one of the other rooms in her house to capture Samson when they were sure that the bowstrings would restrain him. Delilah called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come here to capture you!" But Samson woke up and snapped the bowstrings as easily as fire burns through string. So the Philistines did not find out what made Samson so strong.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Now listen, you made up a story to trick me! Now tell me how someone can really tie you up securely."

11 Samson replied, "If someone actually ties me up with new ropes, ones that no one has used for anything else, then I will have only the strength of an ordinary person."

12 So Delilah once again told the Philistine leaders what Samson had said. She got some new ropes, and she had men hide in one of the rooms in her house. When Samson fell asleep, she tied him up with the ropes. Then she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up and snapped the ropes off his arms as easily as if they had been threads.

13 Then Delilah told Samson, “You made up another story to trick me! Now tell me how someone can really tie you up securely.” Samson replied, “You have a loom here with threads going in one direction. If you weave the seven braids of my hair into those threads in the other direction, **as if you were making fabric,** then I will have only the strength of an ordinary person.”
14 So Delilah **once again told the Philistine leaders what Samson had said, and she had men hide in one of the rooms in her house. Then she** used a shuttle to weave the seven braids of Samson’s hair in and out of the threads she had on her loom. Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!” When Samson woke up, his hair was still in the shuttle. But he pulled it right out of the threads on the loom.

15 After this, Delilah said to him, “You say that you love me, but I do not believe that you do, because you have not told me the truth about yourself. You have tricked me three times and you have not really told me what makes you so strong!” **16** Day after day she nagged him relentlessly to tell her his secret. He felt as if he was going to die from her nagging.

17 So finally Samson told her the whole truth. He told her, “My parents dedicated me to God as a Nazirite on the day I was born. Because of that, no one has ever cut my hair. If someone did shave the hair off my head, then I would lose my great strength. I would have only the strength of an ordinary person.”

18 Delilah realized that this time he had told her the whole truth. So she sent someone to get the Philistine leaders. She told them, “Come back one more time, because Samson has finally told me the secret of his strength.” So the Philistine leaders came back to her house and brought the money they had promised to give her. **19** Then she got Samson to fall deeply asleep. Then she called one of the Philistine men to come and cut off Samson’s hair. This would enable the Philistines to capture him, because he would lose his great strength.

20 Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!”

He woke up and thought, “I will be able to do whatever I need to do to get away from them, just as I did the other times!” But he did not realize that Yahweh was no longer helping him.

21 Instead, the Philistine men captured him. They blinded him by gouging out both of his eyes **so that he could no longer attack any of them**. Then they took him to Gaza. They put him in

prison there and put bronze chains on him so he could not escape. They made him turn a large millstone to grind grain every day. **22** But his hair started to grow again after the man had cut it.

23 Then the Philistine leaders had a big celebration. They offered many sacrifices to their god Dagon. They praised him, saying, "Our god has enabled us to capture Samson, who did so many things to harm us!"

24 When the other people at the festival saw Samson, they also praised their god Dagon, saying, "Samson harmed us greatly. He killed many of our soldiers and ruined many of our crops, but our god Dagon has enabled us to capture him!"

25 The people drank a lot of wine and began to become drunk. Then they shouted, "Get Samson out of the prison! Bring him here so we can ridicule him!"

So they brought Samson from the prison and made him stand in the center of the temple, between the pillars that supported the roof. The people ridiculed him. **26** Samson said to the servant who was leading him by the hand because he was blind, "I want to rest. Place my hands against the two pillars that support the roof so that I can lean against them." **27** All the Philistine leaders were in the temple, along with a great crowd of men and women. There were about 3,000 people on the roof, looking at Samson and ridiculing him. **28** Samson prayed to Yahweh and said, "Lord Yahweh, please think about me again! Please, God, give me strength just once more so that I can take revenge on the Philistines for gouging out my eyes!" **29** Then Samson put his right hand on one of the central pillars of the temple, and he put his left hand on the other one. He pushed hard against both pillars. **30** Then Samson shouted, "I am going to kill all these Philistines, even though I have to die myself!" He pushed on the pillars as hard as he could, and he broke them and the temple collapsed. This killed the Philistine leaders and all the other people who were in the temple. So Samson killed more people when he died than he had killed while he was alive.

31 Later his brothers and other relatives traveled from Zorah to Gaza to get his body. They took it back home and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, at the place where people had previously buried his father Manoah. Samson had led Israel for 20 years.

17 **1** There was a man whose name was Micah who lived in the hilly area that belongs to
the tribe of Ephraim. **2** One day he said to his mother, “Someone stole 1,100 pieces of silver
from your house. I heard you ask Yahweh to make bad things happen to whoever did that. I
confess that I took that silver, and I still have it.” His mother replied, “My son, may Yahweh do
good things for you **because you admitted this**!”

3 Micah gave the 1,100 pieces of silver back to his mother. Then she said, “I am dedicating
some of this silver to Yahweh. I am giving it to you, my son, so that you can have someone
mold a figure from it. I will give you enough silver to do that.”

4 When Micah gave the silver pieces back to his mother, she took 200 of them and gave
them to a metal worker. That man made a molded figure with the silver. Then he gave the
figure to Micah. Micah kept it in his home.

5 Micah made a shrine in which he worshiped idols. He made the kind of vest that priests
wear. He also made some small, personal idols. Micah appointed one of his sons to be his
priest at this shrine. **6** At that time, Israel did not have a king, so everyone did what they
thought they should do.

7 There was a young man who had been living in the town of Bethlehem where people
from the tribe of Judah live. He belonged to the tribe of Levi, but he had been living
temporarily in the territory that Joshua had assigned to the tribe of Judah. **8** Then he left
Bethlehem to look for another place to live. As he was looking, he came to Micah’s house in
the hilly area that belongs to the tribe of Ephraim.

9 Micah asked him, “Where are you from?”

He replied, “I have come from Bethlehem in the territory of Judah. I belong to the tribe of
Levi, and I am looking for a new place to live for a while.” **10** Micah told him, “You may live
in my house with me. You can advise me and be my priest. Each year I will give to you ten
pieces of silver and some new clothes. I will also provide food for you.” So the Levite stayed
there. **11** The Levite agreed to live with Micah. He became like one of his own sons. **12** Micah
appointed the Levite to be his priest, and he lived on Micah’s property. **13** Then Micah said,
“Now I know that Yahweh will do good things for me, because I have a Levite as my priest.”

18 **1** At that time the Israelites had no king.

And at that time people of the tribe of Dan wanted more land where they could live. The other Israelite tribes had been able to occupy the territories that their leaders had assigned to them. But the tribe of Dan had not yet been able to occupy all of their territory. **2** So the Danites chose five strong soldiers from their tribe to look carefully for more land where they could live. These men lived in the part of their territory that the tribe had been able to occupy, in the cities of Zorah and Eshtaol. When the tribe sent them out to explore the land, the men went to the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. They stayed overnight in the area where Micah lived. **3** Since they were close to his house, they could hear the people there talking. They recognized from the way he spoke that the young Levite was from the southern part of Israel, as they were. So they went and asked him, "How did you come here? What are your duties here? How do you support yourself?"

4 He answered, "Let me explain exactly what Micah has done for me. He has given me the job of being his priest."

5 So they said to him, "Please ask God to tell us whether we will succeed in what we are trying to do on this journey."

6 The young man replied, "You should not worry. Yahweh will make you successful in what you are trying to do on your journey."

7 Then the five men left. They came to the city of Laish, and they saw that the people there were not warlike. Instead, they engaged in trading, as the people of the city of Sidon do. The people there thought that they were safe. No ruler was controlling them. Their city was far from Sidon, and they were not part of a defensive league of cities.

8 When those five men returned to their tribe in Zorah and Eshtaol, the other Danites asked them "What do you have to report?"

9 They replied, "We have found some land, and we can assure you that it is very good. So we should go and attack the people who live there. We should not stay here and do nothing. We should go right away and take possession of that land! **10** When you get there, you will find that the people there are not expecting anyone to attack them. There is plenty of land, and it

has everything that we will need. We should certainly go there, because God will enable us to conquer that land."

11 So 600 men from the tribe of Dan left Zorah and Eshtaol. They brought their weapons with them so they could attack the people of Laish. **12** On their way, they set up their tents near the city of Kiriath Jearim in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. That is why people call the area west of Kiriath Jearim Mahaneh Dan. People still call it that now. **13** From there, they went to the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. And they arrived at Micah's house.

14 The five men who had explored the land near Laish said to their fellow Danites, "We want to inform you that in one of these houses, there is a sacred vest, several household idols, and a silver molded figure. Think about the advantages of having those things for ourselves." **15** So they interrupted their journey and went to the house on Micah's property where the young Levite lived. They told him they hoped he was doing well. **16** The 600 soldiers from the tribe of Dan stood outside the gate to the compound, holding their weapons. **17** The five men who had explored the land went into the house where Micah himself lived. They took the sacred vest, the household idols, and the silver molded figure. They made the priest go out and stand outside the gate with the 600 soldiers who were holding weapons.

18 He saw them bringing out the sacred vest, the household idols, and the silver molded figure from Micah's house. The priest told them it was wrong to take those things.

19 They replied, "Do not object. Just come quietly with us and advise us and be our priest. It is certainly better for you to be the priest for a whole tribe of Israelites than to stay here and be the priest just for one man's family and servants." **20** The priest liked what they were suggesting. So he took the sacred vest, the household idols, and the silver molded figure and he left with the Danites. **21** When they left, the soldiers had their children and cattle walk in front of them. They also had the animals that were carrying their baggage, including the items they had taken from Micah, walk in front of them. That was to protect them from an attack from the rear.

22 Micah gathered together the men who lived near him and they formed an army. Although the Danites had gotten some distance away by the time they started pursuing them,

they were able to catch up with them. **23** Micah and his men shouted at the men of the tribe of Dan. They turned around and asked Micah, “Why have you come after us with this army?”

24 Micah replied, “You took away my own silver idols and my priest! Those were the things I valued the most. So you should not be asking me why I have come after you with an army.”

25 The men from the tribe of Dan replied, “You had better not say anything further about this to us. Otherwise some of our men will become angry and attack you, and they would kill you and your relatives and servants!” **26** Then the men from the tribe of Dan continued walking. Micah realized that those soldiers would defeat him and his neighbors if they fought. So he turned around and went home.

27 The men of the tribe of Dan kept Micah’s household idols and his priest, and they continued traveling to Laish. They attacked the people who were living there, who had thought that they were safe. They killed all of them, and then they burned everything in the city.
28 There was no group of people to rescue the people of Laish. The city was far from Sidon, so the people who lived there could not help them. And the people of Laish had no other allies. (Laish was in a valley near the town of Beth Rehob.)

The people of the tribe of Dan rebuilt the city and lived there themselves. **29** They gave a new name to the city. They called it Dan, in honor of their ancestor whose name was Dan. He was one of Israel’s sons. But previously the name of the city had been Laish. **30** The people of the tribe of Dan began to worship the silver molded figure that had belonged to Micah. They appointed Jonathan son of Gershom, the grandson of Moses, to be their priest. His descendants continued to be their priests until the Assyrians captured the Israelites who lived in that area and took them away to other countries. **31** Even though the sacred tent was in Shiloh at this time **and Israelites were supposed to worship there**, the people of the tribe of Dan worshiped the silver molded figure that had belonged to Micah.

19 **1** At that time the Israelites had no king.

There was a Levite who lived in a remote place in the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. He had married a woman as a secondary wife. She was from the city

whose name is Bethlehem that is in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. **2** But his secondary wife was unfaithful to him, and then she left him and returned to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah. She kept living there for four months. **3** Then her husband went to Bethlehem to try to persuade her to live with him again. He brought his servant and two donkeys with him. When he arrived at her father's house, she invited him to come in. When her father saw him, he was happy that he had come. **4** The woman's father insisted that he stay for a visit. So he stayed there for three days. During that time, he shared meals with his host and slept in his house.

5 On the fourth day, they all got up early in the morning because the Levite wanted to travel back home that day. But his wife's father said to him, "You should really have something to eat before you go **so that you are not hungry on your journey**." **6** So the two men had a meal together. Then the wife's father said to the Levite, "Please agree to stay another night. Relax and have a good time." **7** The Levite wanted to leave, but his wife's father finally persuaded him to stay again that night. **8** On the fifth day, the man got up early and prepared to leave. But the woman's father said to him once again, "You should have something to eat." So the two men once again had a meal together, and they did not finish until the end of the day.

9 Then the Levite got up to leave with his wife and his servant. But the woman's father said, "Please do not leave. See how the sun is getting lower in the sky. See how dark it is getting already. You should stay here tonight and have a good time. Then you can leave on your journey tomorrow morning and get all the way home **in one day**." **10** But the Levite did not want to stay for another night. So he put saddles on his two donkeys and left with his wife **and his servant**. They traveled as far as the city of Jebus, which people now call Jerusalem.

11 It was late in the afternoon by the time they got to Jebus. So the servant said to his master, "I know that the Jebusites live in this city, but I think we need to stop and stay here for the night."

12 But his master told him, "No, it would not be good for us to stay here where foreign people live. There are no Israelite people here. We should go on to the city of Gibeah." **13** He told his servant, "Instead of staying here, we can go a little farther to a city where Israelites live. We could stay for the night in either Gibeah or Ramah." **14** So they continued walking. By the time they reached Gibeah, where people from the tribe of Benjamin live, the sun was

setting. **15** So they stopped there in Gibeah to stay for the night. They went into the public square of that city and sat down **as travelers did who were hoping that someone would give them a place to stay**. But no one who went through the square invited them to stay in his house for the night.

16 But then an old man came by. He had been out working in the fields all day. He was from the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. But at that time, he was living in Gibeah. He did not belong to the tribe of Benjamin as most of the people there did. **17** When he saw the Levite in the open area, he realized that he was traveling and did not have a place to stay in that city. So the old man asked him, "Where have you come from? And where are you going?"

18 The Levite replied, "We are returning from Bethlehem in Judah to my home in the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. I went from there to Bethlehem. However, before we return to my home, we are going to the sacred tent **in Shiloh**. No one here has invited us to stay in their house tonight." **19** **But wanting to be polite and not wanting to impose, the Levite continued,** "However, we have straw and grain to feed our donkeys. And I and my wife and our servant have bread and wine to eat and drink. So we do not need anything else."

20 The old man said, "I will take care of you. I will provide you with a place to stay. I do not want you to have to spend the night in the open square." **21** Then the old man took them to his house. He gave food to their donkeys. He gave the man and the woman and the servant water so they could wash the dust from the road off their feet. Then the old man served them a meal.

22 While they were having a good time together, a group of very wicked men from that city surrounded the house and started to bang on the door. They shouted to the old man whose house it was, "Bring out the man who has come to your house! We are all going to rape him!"

23 The old man whose house it was went outside to talk to them. He told them, "Please do not commit such a crime against this man! We are all members of the same community. I have offered this man shelter and safety in my home. You should **respect that and** not do such a terrible thing to him! **24** Listen, I have an unmarried daughter living with me in my home. This man's wife is also here. I will bring them out to you, and you can have sex with them and do whatever you want to them. But do not do such a terrible thing to this man!"

25 But the men did not agree to do what he had said. So the man pushed his wife outside the house where those men were. They forced her to have sex with them. They abused her all night long. At dawn, they finally let her go. 26 The sun was rising when the woman got back to the old man's house, where her husband was staying. But she collapsed at the doorway and remained there until it became light.

27 That morning, her husband got up and unlocked the doors and left the house to continue his journey. But he saw his wife lying there at the doorway of the house. Her hands were on the doorsill. 28 He said to her, "Come on, we can go now." But she did not answer, **because she was dead**. He put her body on one of the donkeys, and he **and his servant** traveled back to his home.

29 When he arrived at his home, he took a knife and cut his wife's body into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece into the territory of each of the tribes of Israel, **along with a messenger to tell what had happened**. 30 Then everyone who saw a piece of the body **and heard the message** said, "Nothing like this has happened since our ancestors came here from Egypt! No one has heard of such a terrible thing! We all need to think carefully about this, and people should say what they think we should do in response."

20 1 Then many people from throughout Israel traveled to Mizpah so they could meet together there and talk about what to do. They came from as far north as the city of Dan and from as far south as the city of Beersheba. They also came from the region of Gilead east of the Jordan River. They asked Yahweh to be present with them and guide their discussion.
2 The leaders who had come from various tribes of Israel met together with all the other Israelite people. There were 400,000 men there who had learned how to fight well on foot with a sword. 3 The people of the tribe of Benjamin heard that the other Israelites were meeting in Mizpah. But no one from the tribe of Benjamin joined them there.

The other Israelites who had gathered asked to hear how this horrible crime had happened.
4 The Levite whose wife the men of Gibeah had murdered spoke up. He said, "My wife and I were traveling, and we needed a place to stay for the night. We went to the city whose name is Gibeah that is in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. 5 That evening, a gang of men who seem to be able to do whatever they want in that city surrounded the house where we were staying. They wanted to rape me, and they would have killed me afterwards. **I know that**

because they raped my wife all night so that she died. 6 I took her body home and cut it into pieces. Then I sent one piece into the territory of each of the tribes of Israel. I did that because I wanted you all to know about this terrible, wicked thing that those men did right here in Israel. 7 So now, all you Israelites, talk together here and decide what you should do about this!"

8 Then all the people stood up together to show how resolved they were and said, "None of us will go back to where we live until we make sure that those men will be punished! 9 This is what we must do to the people of Gibeah. First, we will cast lots to choose an army of soldiers to attack them. 10 Then, we will have one tenth of our people get supplies for those soldiers. That way they will have what they need to go to Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin and punish the people who are responsible for doing this terrible thing in the land of Israel." 11 And all the Israelite people agreed that they had to punish the people of Gibeah. They would all work together to do that.

12 The assembly of Israelites also agreed to send messengers throughout the tribe of Benjamin. They told these messengers to say, "Some of your men have done a very wicked thing in your territory! 13 Those wicked men live in the city of Gibeah. Surrender them to us so that we can execute them. That way we can get rid of the influence that the wicked thing they did is having on the people of Israel."

But the people of the tribe of Benjamin refused to surrender the men as the other Israelites had demanded. 14 The men who lived in other cities in the territory of Benjamin gathered at Gibeah to defend it against the other Israelites when they attacked. 15 When they did that, a total of 26,000 fighting men came from those cities to fight. Another 700 skilled warriors who lived in Gibeah joined them. 16 Among those soldiers there were 700 skilled warriors who were left-handed. They could all sling stones and hit targets with great accuracy.

17 The people of all the tribes of Israel except Benjamin formed an army of 400,000 men. Those men had learned how to fight with a sword. They were all experienced soldiers.

18 Those other Israelites wanted to ask God for advice. So they went to Bethel where the sacred chest was at that time. They asked, "Which tribe's soldiers should lead the attack when we go and fight against the tribe of Benjamin?"

Yahweh answered, "The soldiers from the tribe of Judah should lead the attack."

19 So the next morning the Israelite soldiers went and set up a military camp near Gibeah.
20 After that, the Israelite soldiers went to fight against the men from the tribe of Benjamin.
They got into positions near Gibeah where they could fight a battle. **21** The soldiers from the
tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and fought against them. They killed 22,000 soldiers
from Israel in that battle. **22** But the soldiers of Israel did not give up. They got ready to fight
the next day in the same battle lines as on the first day. **23** Some of them had gone **to Bethel**
and mourned in Yahweh's presence until the end of that day. They had asked Yahweh what
they should do. They had said, "Should we fight another battle with the soldiers from the tribe
of Benjamin, even though they are Israelites just as we are?" Yahweh had answered, "Yes,
attack them!" **24** So the next day the Israelite soldiers once again advanced against the
Benjaminite army. **25** The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin came out from Gibeah to fight
another battle. They attacked them, and they killed 18,000 more Israelite soldiers who had all
learned how to fight well with a sword.

26 That afternoon, the soldiers who had survived went to Bethel. All the other Israelites
who had come to support the army went with them. They sat there in Yahweh's presence and
mourned. They ate nothing that day until the sun set. At the sacred tent the priests made
sacrifices for them that they burned completely on the altar, and they also made fellowship
sacrifices. **27** The people of Israel asked Yahweh to guide them. The sacred chest of God was
in Bethel at that time. **28** Phinehas son of Eleazar, the grandson of Aaron, was serving as the
high priest at the sacred tent at that time. The Israelites asked, "Should we fight another battle
with the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin, even though they are Israelites just as we are? Or
should we not fight any more battles?" Yahweh said, "Attack them, because tomorrow I will
enable you to defeat them." **29** The Israelites had many of their soldiers hide in the fields
around Gibeah. **30** The other Israelite soldiers advanced against Gibeah for a third time. They
stood in their positions for fighting a battle against the Benjaminite army just as they had done
on the previous days. **31** Then the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin came out of the city to
fight against them. The Israelite soldiers retreated so that they would chase them and go away
from the city. The Benjaminite soldiers were able to kill some of them as they had done before.
They killed them on the roads **that they were using to retreat**. (One of those roads went to
Bethel, and the other road went through the countryside to Gibeah.) They killed about 30
Israelite soldiers.

32 The men of the tribe of Benjamin thought, “We are defeating them as we did before!”
But the Israelite soldiers had only retreated in order to trick the soldiers from Benjamin into
leaving the city and going down the roads.

33 All at once, the soldiers in the main Israelite army stopped running away and came
together into battle positions at a place that people call Baal Tamar. The other Israelite soldiers
ran out from where they had been hiding in Maareh Gibeah. **34** There were 10,000 of those
soldiers, and the Israelites had selected them for this mission from throughout their army. They
advanced against the Benjaminite soldiers from the direction of the city. There was a very big
battle. The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin did not yet realize that the Israelites were going
to defeat them badly. **35** Yahweh enabled the Israelite soldiers to defeat the soldiers from the
tribe of Benjamin. That day the Israelites killed 25,100 Benjaminites who had all learned how
to fight well with a sword. **36** Finally the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin recognized that
they were going to lose the battle. **They realized that** the Israelite soldiers had only retreated
because they knew they had other soldiers hiding around Gibeah **who would come and attack
them from behind**. **37** Those soldiers who had been hiding came out and rushed quickly into
Gibeah. They killed everyone who lived in the city. **38** The main group of Israelite soldiers
knew when to stop fleeing and turn around and attack because they had arranged for the soldiers
who were hiding to give them a signal. They told them to **set the city on fire once they had
entered it so that** a great cloud of smoke would rise from it into the sky.

39 That was why the main group of Israelite soldiers had fled from the battle. They wanted
the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin to think that they were winning the battle, just as they
had before. The soldiers from Benjamin were able to kill about 30 Israelite soldiers. **40** But
then a cloud of smoke began to rise up from the city because the Israelite soldiers who had
been hiding were setting fires as a signal. The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin turned
around and saw a great cloud of smoke going up into the sky because fires were burning
throughout the city. **41** The main group of Israelite men also saw the smoke, and so they turned
around **and began to attack the Benjaminites**. The soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin became
very afraid, because they realized that they were going to be badly defeated. **42** So the soldiers
from the tribe of Benjamin tried to run away toward the desolate area outside the city to escape
from the Israelite soldiers. But they were not able to escape, because the rest of the Israelite
soldiers were coming at them from the other direction. They were caught between the two

groups. **43** The Israelite soldiers surrounded many of the soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin, chasing them into an area east of Gibeah. The Israelite soldiers easily killed many of them there. **44** The Israelites killed 18,000 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin who were all great warriors. **45** Those who were still alive tried to run to the rock of Rimmon in a desolate area **where they could protect themselves**. But the Israelite soldiers killed 5,000 more soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin on the roads as they were trying to run away. The Israelites chased other soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin who were fleeing towards the city of Gidom. The Israelites killed 2,000 of them.

46 Altogether 25,000 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin who had learned how to fight well with a sword died that day. They were all great warriors. **47** But 600 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin escaped into a desolate area. They got safely to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed there for four months. **48** Then the Israelite soldiers went throughout the territory that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin and slaughtered everyone. They killed all the people in each city. They also killed all the animals and destroyed everything else that was in those cities. They also burned all of the cities in that territory to the ground.

21 **1** (When the Israelites gathered at Mizpah before they started to fight the tribe of Benjamin, all of the men made a solemn promise. They had declared, "None of us will ever allow one of our daughters to marry a man from the tribe of Benjamin!") **2** **After destroying the people, animals, and property throughout the territory of Benjamin,** the Israelites went to Bethel where God's sacred tent was. They sat down and wept very loudly and sadly all day. **3** They kept saying, "Yahweh, you are the God of us Israelite people. But one of our Israelite tribes does not exist anymore! This should not have happened to us!"

4 Early the next morning, the people built an altar at Bethel. The priests made sacrifices for them that they burned completely on the altar, and they also made fellowship sacrifices.

5 Then the Israelites started asking whether the people of any city in one of the tribes of Israel had not come when they met to ask Yahweh for guidance. They were asking this because they had all sworn very solemnly that they would kill any group that did not come when they met with Yahweh at Mizpah.

6 The Israelites were asking about this because they felt sorry for their fellow Israelites from
the tribe of Benjamin. They said, “Now one of our Israelite tribes no longer exists. 7 Let us
think about what we can do to make sure that the surviving men from the tribe of Benjamin
have wives. This is a difficult problem, because all of us here made a solemn promise to Yahweh
that we would not allow any of our daughters to marry a man from the tribe of Benjamin.”
8 That is why the people were asking whether the people from any city in one of the tribes of
Israel had not sent anyone to Mizpah when the Israelites met with Yahweh there. They thought
they recalled that no one had come from the city of Jabesh Gilead to the meeting at Mizpah.
9 So they checked everyone who was there in Bethel, and they found that no one who lived in
the city of Jabesh Gilead was there. This seemed to prove that none of them had come to Mizpah.

10 So all the Israelites chose 12,000 experienced soldiers and gave them orders to go and
kill all of the people who lived in Jabesh Gilead, including the women and the children.
11 They told those soldiers: “This is what we want you to do: kill all of the men in Jabesh
Gilead. You must also kill every married woman. But do not kill the unmarried women.” 12 So
those soldiers went to Jabesh Gilead and killed all the men, married women, and children. But in
that city they found 400 young women there who had never been married. So they brought
them to Shiloh, where they had all gone by then. That city was across the river from the region
where the city of Jabesh Gilead was.

13 Then all the Israelites who had gathered sent a message to the men from the tribe of
Benjamin who had gone to the rock of Rimmon where they could protect themselves. The
Israelites said that they would not try to kill them. 14 So the Benjaminites then came back
from the rock of Rimmon. The Israelites allowed them to marry the young women from Jabesh
Gilead whom they had not killed. But there were only 400 women. That was not enough women
for those 600 men.

15 So the Israelites still felt sorry for the men of the tribe of Benjamin. It seemed that one
of the Israelite tribes would not exist any more because Yahweh had told the other Israelites to
fight against that tribe. 16 The Israelite leaders said, “We have killed all the women of the tribe
of Benjamin. So where can we get women to be wives of the men who are still alive?” 17 They
continued, “These surviving Benjaminites must have wives who will give birth to children so
that their family lines can continue. Otherwise, the tribe of Benjamin will no longer exist in

Israel. **18** But we Israelites all solemnly asked Yahweh to curse anyone who gave one of his daughters to any man of the tribe of Benjamin as a wife. So we cannot allow our daughters to marry these men." **19** Then they had an idea. They remembered, "Every year there is a festival to honor Yahweh at Shiloh." (That city is north of Bethel and east of the road that extends from Bethel to Shechem. It is south of the city of Lebonah.)

20 So the Israelite leaders told the surviving men of the tribe of Benjamin **who did not yet have wives**, "When it is the time for that festival, go to Shiloh and hide in the vineyards around the city. **21** Keep watching for the young women to come out of Shiloh to dance. When they come out, run out from the vineyards. Each of you men can seize one of the young women of Shiloh. Then you can all return to your homes in the territory of Benjamin with those women as your wives. **22** If their fathers or brothers come to us and demand that you give the women back, we will say to them, 'Please allow us to give your young women to the men of Benjamin as wives. Do this because, when we fought them, we did not leave any women alive who could be their wives. And you are not giving your young women now to the men from the tribe of Benjamin as wives. They stole them. So you will not be guilty of breaking the oath that we all swore not to give any of our daughters as a wife to any of them.'"

23 So that is what the men of the tribe of Benjamin did. They went to Shiloh at the time of the festival. When the young women came out of the city to dance, each man grabbed one of them and took her away and married her. Then they took their wives back to the land that the Israelite leaders had assigned to them. They rebuilt their cities that the other Israelites had burned down, and they lived there.

24 Then the other Israelites left Shiloh and all went back to where their families and tribes lived. They returned to the areas that the Israelite leaders had assigned to their tribes.

25 At that time, Israel did not have a king, and everyone did what they thought they should do.

Ruth

1 **1** During the time that judges ruled **Israel**, there was a famine in that country. A man from the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judah **in the country of Israel** left there and went to live for a while in the country of Moab. His wife and his two sons went with him. **2** The man's name was Elimelech and his wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. All of them were part of the clan of Ephrathah, from Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the land of Moab and stayed there. **3** Then Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died, and Naomi had only her two sons with her. **4** **Eventually,** the sons married women from Moab. The name of one woman was Orpah, and the name of the other woman was Ruth. But after Naomi and her sons had lived in Moab for about ten years, **5** Mahlon and Kilion also died. So then Naomi was alone without her husband or her two sons.

6 **One day** while Naomi was in Moab, she heard someone say that Yahweh had helped his people **in Israel** and that now they had plenty of food. So she got ready to return **to Bethlehem** with her daughters-in-law. **7** She and her two daughters-in-law left the place where she had been living and they started to walk along the road back to Judah. **8** Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Each of you should turn around and go back to live with your mother. I am asking Yahweh to be as faithful to you as you have been to your dead husbands and to me. **9** I am asking Yahweh to allow each of you to have another husband with whom you will have a secure home." Then she kissed each of them, and they cried aloud. **10** They each said, "No! We will return with you to your relatives."

11 But Naomi said, "No, my daughters. Return home. It will not do any good for you to come with me! It is not possible for me to have more sons who could become your husbands. **12** You should go back, my daughters. It is too late for me to have another husband. Even if I thought that I could have another husband, and was married even tonight and had more sons, **13** you would not wait until they grew up! You could not remain unmarried until then! No, my daughters, Yahweh has done very bad things to me, causing me to grieve very much. But your lives do not need to be as bad as mine."

14 Then Ruth and Orpah cried loudly again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and
left, but Ruth stayed with Naomi. 15 Naomi said to her, “Look! Your sister-in-law is going
back to her relatives and to the god that she worshiped previously! Go back with her!” 16 But
Ruth replied, “No! Please do not insist that I abandon you and stop taking care of you!
Wherever you travel, I will travel too. Wherever you live, I will live too. Your relatives will be
my relatives, and I will worship the God whom you worship. 17 Wherever you die, there I will
die, and they will bury me there. May Yahweh punish me severely if I leave you even after we
die.” 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth had firmly resolved to go with her, Naomi stopped
urging Ruth to return home.

19 So the two women continued walking until they came to the town of Bethlehem. When
they arrived in Bethlehem, many people in the town began talking loudly about them. Many
women of the town exclaimed, “It is hard to believe that this is Naomi!” 20 Naomi said to
them, “You should not call me Naomi anymore, since it means ‘pleasant.’ Instead, call me
Mara, because it means ‘bitter.’ God Almighty has made my life very bitter. 21 When I left, I
had everything I could want, but Yahweh has brought me back with nothing. Do not call me
Naomi. Yahweh has opposed me. Almighty God has treated me badly.”

22 So that is how Naomi returned home along with her daughter-in-law Ruth, the woman
from Moab. When they arrived in Bethlehem, it was the season for people there to begin
harvesting their crops of barley.

2 1 There was a man there who was a relative of Naomi’s dead husband, Elimelech. He was
rich and important, and a member of the same clan to which Elimelech belonged. The man’s
name was Boaz. 2 Ruth (the woman from Moab) said to Naomi, “Let me go to the fields and
pick up the grain that the harvesters leave behind. I will go behind any harvester who allows
me to do so.” Naomi replied, “Go ahead, my daughter.” 3 So Ruth went. When she got to the
fields, she followed the harvesters and picked up grain. The part of the field that she was
working in just happened to belong to Boaz, Elimelek’s relative.

4 Just then, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem! He greeted the harvesters, “May Yahweh be
with you!” They replied, “May Yahweh bless you!”

5 Then Boaz saw Ruth, and asked his foreman, “Who is that young woman related to?”
6 The foreman replied, “She is the young woman from Moab who accompanied Naomi when
she returned from there. 7 The woman said to me, ‘Please let me pick up the grain that the men
who are harvesting leave behind.’ I allowed her to do so. She has worked since early this
morning until recently, when she rested for a short time under the shelter.” 8 Then Boaz
walked over to where Ruth was and said to Ruth, “Young lady, please listen to me. You do not
need to go to any other field or anywhere else to gather grain. You should stay right here with
my servant girls. 9 Watch where the men are harvesting and follow along behind my servant
girls. I have told the men who are harvesting not to molest you. Whenever you are thirsty, go
and get some water to drink from the jars that the men have filled.”

10 Then she knelt before him in respect with her forehead touching the ground. She
exclaimed, “Why are you being so kind to me? I did not think that you would pay any attention
to me, since I am a foreigner!” 11 Boaz replied, “People have told me everything that you have
done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. They told me that you left your parents
and your homeland, and that you came here to live among people whom you did not know
previously. 12 I pray that Yahweh will fully repay you for what you have done. Yes, may
Yahweh, the God of Israel, the one whom you are trusting to protect you, reward you in full.”

13 She replied, “Sir, I hope I will continue to please you. You have comforted me by
speaking so kindly to me, your servant, and yet I am not even worthy to be one of your servant
girls!”

14 When it was time to eat, Boaz said to Ruth, “Come over here and get some food. Take
some of this bread and dip it in the vinegar and eat it.” So she came and sat down with the
harvesters. Then he gave her some roasted grain. She ate all the food that she wanted and had
some left over. 15 After she stood up to go back to work, Boaz ordered his workers, “Even if
she gathers some grain near the bundles of grain that you have cut, do not tell her to stop doing
that. 16 Even more than that, I want you to pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and
leave them on the ground for her to pick up—and do not scold her.”

17 So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley that she
had gathered, to separate the kernels from the stalks. The barley kernels were enough to fill a
large basket. 18 She carried it back to town and showed her mother-in-law how much she had

gathered. Ruth also gave her mother-in-law the roasted grain that she had left over after she had eaten all that she had wanted at lunchtime. 19 Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you gather all this grain today? In whose field did you work? I pray that God will bless the man who was so kind to you.” Then Ruth told her about the person with whom she had worked. She said, “The name of the man who owns the field where I worked today is Boaz.” 20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May Yahweh bless him! Yahweh has continued to act faithfully toward us who are still living, and to our husbands who have died.” Then Naomi said, “That man is a close relative of Elimelek. In fact, he is one of those responsible for taking care of our family.”

21 Then Ruth, the woman from Moab, said, “He also told me to stay with his workers until they are done bringing in all his grain from the field.”

22 Naomi replied to her daughter-in-law Ruth, “My daughter, it will be good for you to go to his field with his servant girls, because if you go to someone else’s field, someone might assault you.”

23 So Ruth worked alongside of Boaz’s servant girls. She gathered heads of grain until the workers had finished harvesting both the barley and the wheat. During that time, she continued to live with Naomi.

3 1 One day, Naomi said to Ruth, “My daughter, I want to arrange for you to have a secure home with a good husband. 2 Now, you have been working with Boaz’s servant girls. As you know, he is a close relative of ours. So listen carefully. Tonight he will be at the place where they thresh the barley. He will be separating the grain from the chaff. 3 Bathe yourself and put on some perfume. Put on your full outer cloak. Then go down to the place where they thresh the grain. But do not let him know that you are there until he has finished his evening meal. 4 When he lies down to sleep, pay attention to where he lies down. Then go over to him, uncover his feet, and lie down there. When he wakes up, he will be the one to tell you what to do next.”

5 Ruth replied, “I will do everything that you have told me to do.” 6 So she went down to the place where people thresh the grain. There she did everything that her mother-in-law had told her to do.

7 This is what happened: When Boaz finished eating and drinking, he was feeling good. He went over to the far end of the grain pile, lay down there, and went to sleep. Then Ruth stealthily approached him. She took the covering off his feet and lay down there. 8 In the middle of the night, he woke up suddenly. He sat up and was amazed to find a woman lying at his feet! 9 He asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "I am your servant, Ruth. Since you are the one responsible for my dead husband's family, please make me secure by marrying me."

10 Boaz replied, "May Yahweh bless you, my dear! Previously, you were very faithful to your mother-in-law, but you are acting even more faithfully now by not chasing after a young man to marry, whether rich or poor. 11 Now, my dear, I will do everything that you asked. Do not be afraid, because everyone in this town knows that you are an honorable woman.
12 However, while it is true that I am one of Elimelek's close relatives and, therefore, could be responsible for you and Naomi, there is another man who is a closer relative than I am. He is the one who is actually responsible for you. 13 You stay here for the rest of the night. Tomorrow morning I will tell this man about you. If he says that he will take care of you, fine, he can marry you. But if he is unwilling to take care of you, I solemnly promise that, as surely as Yahweh lives, I will marry you and take care of you myself. So stay here until it is morning."

14 Then Boaz added, "It would be best if no one knew that a woman came here." So she lay at his feet until early morning and got up to leave before it was light enough that people would be able to recognize her. 15 Then Boaz said to her, "Bring your shawl over here and hold it out." When she did that, he poured a generous amount of barley into it and put it on her back. Then he went into town.

16 When Ruth arrived home, her mother-in-law asked her, "How did things turn out for you, my daughter?" Then Ruth told her all that Boaz had said and done for her. 17 She also said to Naomi, "He gave me all this barley, saying, 'I do not want you to return to your mother-in-law with nothing.'" 18 Then Naomi said, "My daughter, just wait here until we see what happens. That man will work hard on this matter until he has resolved it today."

4 1 Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the place inside the town gate where people conducted their official business. He sat down there. Just as he had hoped, the man responsible for Naomi's family came along, the man whom Boaz had mentioned earlier. Boaz called out to him by

name and said, “Come over here and sit down.” So the man came over and sat down. **2** Boaz then gathered ten of the older, well-respected men from the town and said to them, “Please sit here so you can witness our business.” So they sat down. **3** Then Boaz said to the man responsible for Naomi’s family, “The part of the field that belonged to our relative Elimelek is for sale. Naomi, who recently returned from Moab, is selling it. **4** I thought that I should tell you about it and suggest that you buy the field while the people who are sitting here are listening, including these leaders of our people. If you want to buy it back into the family, then do so. But if you do not want to buy it back, then let me know, because you are the closest relative to Elimelek, and I am next after you.” The man replied, “No, I will buy it!” **5** Then Boaz told him, “When you buy the land from Naomi, you will also need to marry Ruth, our deceased relative’s widow from Moab, in order that she may have a son who will inherit the property and who will continue Elimelek’s family line.” **6** Then the nearer relative said, “Then I cannot buy it back myself. If I did that, I would ruin my own son’s inheritance. You may be responsible for the land and the woman instead of me. I cannot do it.”

7 (At that time in Israel, people had a different way of redeeming land or exchanging goods between them. In order to make these matters legally binding, one man would take off one of his sandals and give it to the other man. That was the way people in Israel made final what they had agreed to do.) **8** So after the relative said to Boaz, “You buy the field yourself,” he took off one of his sandals and gave it to Boaz.

9 Then Boaz said to the respected men and to all the other people who were there, “Today you have all seen that I have bought from Naomi all the property that belonged to Elimelek, Kilion, and Mahlon. **10** I am also taking Ruth, Mahlon’s widow from Moab, to be my wife. This is in order that she may give birth to a son. Everyone will consider this son to be a descendant of Elimelek. This son will inherit the property and carry on Elimelek’s family name among his relatives and here in his hometown. Today you have seen and heard these things and can speak of them to anyone who asks about them.”

11 All the respected men, and the others who were sitting at the town gate, agreed, and they said, “Yes, we have seen and heard. We pray that Yahweh will allow this woman, who will be coming into your home, to be like Rachel and Leah, the two who bore our ancestors and started our people, Israel. May you become great in the clan of Ephrathah and famous here in Bethlehem! **12** We pray that your family will be like the family of your ancestor Perez, son of

Judah and Tamar, because of the many descendants that Yahweh will give to you and this young woman."

13 So Boaz married Ruth and had sexual relations with her. Yahweh enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. **14** The women of Bethlehem said to Naomi, "Praise Yahweh for giving you a man to preserve your family today. We pray to Yahweh that people throughout Israel will greatly respect him. **15** Your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who has been better to you than if you had seven sons, has given birth to him. Therefore, he will make you feel young again, and he will take care of you when you become old."

16 Then Naomi picked up the baby and held him closely and became a second mother to him. **17** The women who were living nearby said, "It is as though Naomi now has a son!" They named him Obed. Later, Obed became the father of Jesse, who became the father of **King** David. **18** Here is a list of the descendants of Perez: Perez's son was Hezron. **19** Hezron's son was Ram. Ram's son was Amminadab. **20** Amminadab's son was Nahshon. Nahshon's son was Salmon. **21** Salmon's son was Boaz. Boaz's son was Obed. **22** Obed's son was Jesse. Jesse's son was **King** David.

First Samuel

1 [1] There was a man whose name was Elkanah who lived in the town of Ramathaim Zophim. That town was in the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live. His father was Jeroham, his grandfather was Elihu, his great-grandfather was Tohu, and his great-great-grandfather was Zuph. Elkanah belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. [2] Elkanah had two wives. Their names were Hannah and Peninnah. Now Peninnah had several children, but Hannah had no children.

[3] Once every year Elkanah went with his family from Ramah to the city of Shiloh. He would go there to worship Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, and offer sacrifices to him. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were serving Yahweh as priests there **with their father**. [4] Every year when Elkanah offered sacrifices, he would give servings of meat to Peninnah and to each of her children. [5] But he would serve Hannah twice as much meat because he loved her very much even though Yahweh had not allowed her to give birth to children. [6] But Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, would try to make Hannah upset. She would remind her that Yahweh had not allowed her to give birth to any children. [7] Every year when the family went to Yahweh's sacred tent, Peninnah would make Hannah so upset that Hannah cried and would not eat. [8] Then her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, you should not be crying. You should eat something. You do not need to be sad. You have me as your loving husband, and that is better than having ten sons **but an unhappy marriage**."

[9] One year, after the family had finished eating and drinking at Shiloh, Hannah went over to Yahweh's sacred tent to pray. Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorway of the sacred tent **so he could see and speak with the people who came in and out**. [10] Hannah was very upset, and so she cried very sorrowfully as she prayed to Yahweh. [11] Hannah made a solemn promise. She said, "Yahweh, you command the heavenly armies**, so you are powerful enough to do anything**. I am a woman who serves you devotedly. Please consider how unhappy I am. Please do something to help me. Allow me to give birth to a son. If you do that, then I will

dedicate him to you for as long as he lives. And **to show that we have dedicated him,** we will never cut his hair."

12 Hannah prayed to Yahweh for a long time. As she prayed, Eli noticed that her lips were moving. **13** But Hannah was just praying silently. She was not speaking out loud. So Eli thought that she was drunk. **14** He said to her, "You should not be getting drunk! Get rid of the wine you have been drinking!"

15 Hannah replied, "Sir, I am not drunk, I am just very sad. I have not been drinking any wine or beer. I have been praying and telling Yahweh how I feel and what I want him to do for me. **16** Do not think that I am a bad woman. Someone has made me feel very badly, so I have a lot to talk to Yahweh about. That is all I have been doing."

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

18 She replied, "Please continue to hope and pray that good things will happen to me." Then she returned to her family, and she ate the meal that her husband had served to her. She was not sad anymore.

19 Early the next morning, Elkanah and his family got up and worshiped Yahweh again. After that, they returned to their home at Ramah. Then Elkanah had sexual relations with his wife Hannah, and Yahweh answered her prayer. **20** She became pregnant, and nine months later she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel. That name expressed in her language that Yahweh had answered her prayer for a son.

21 The next year, Elkanah went to Shiloh with his family to offer to Yahweh the kind of sacrifice he made each year. He also went to make a special offering that he had promised to make. **22** But Hannah did not go with them. She told her husband, "I want to keep the baby here until I have weaned him. After that, I will take him to Shiloh and present him to Yahweh. He will stay there for the rest of his life."

23 Elkanah told her, "Do what you think is best. Stay here until you have weaned him. And may Yahweh bless this boy as his priest Eli wished he would." So Hannah stayed at home and nursed Samuel until she had weaned him.

24 After she weaned him, even though Samuel was still very young, she took him to Yahweh's sacred tent at Shiloh. She also brought three bulls**, one for an offering that the priests would burn completely and the other two for festive meals that the family and others would share**. She also brought about twenty liters of flour and a large container of wine **because the law of Moses required people to offer that amount of flour and wine with sacrifices**. **25** Elkanah and Hannah slaughtered the bull **so that the priests could offer it to Yahweh on the altar**. Then they brought their son to Eli. **26** Then Hannah said to him, "Sir, please listen to me. I swear by your own life, sir, that what I am saying is true. I am the woman who was praying to Yahweh as I stood here beside you. **27** I prayed that I would have a son, and Yahweh answered my prayer. Here he is! **28** So now I am presenting him to Yahweh. He will belong to Yahweh as long as he lives." Then Elkanah and his family worshiped Yahweh there.

2 **1** Then Hannah prayed. She said,

"In my inner being I am so happy about what you, Yahweh, have done!
I am strong because I belong to you.
I laugh at my enemies
because I am celebrating the way that you, Yahweh, have helped me.

2 No one else is holy as you are, Yahweh.
You are the only real God.
You, our God, are the only one who can protect us
as if you were a huge rock that we could stand atop and be safe from danger.

3 **You people who oppose God,** stop making so many boasts!
Yahweh is a God who knows everything,
and he will evaluate what each person does.

4 So do not speak so arrogantly! Yahweh, you destroy the weapons of mighty soldiers,
but you give strength to those who totter because they are so weak.

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

Women who could not have any children before have now given birth to many children,

but women who had many children before are not able to have any more.

6 You, Yahweh, cause some people to die,

and you cause other people to live.

It seems that some people will soon go to where dead people go,

but you make them healthy again.

7 Yahweh, you cause some people to be poor,

but you cause others to become rich.

You humble some people,

but you honor other people.

8 Needy people often do not have homes,

but Yahweh gives those poor people places to live in.

People then treat them respectfully,

and they even sit with community leaders.

After all, it was Yahweh who created a place

on which the world itself rests.

9 You protect from harm people who are loyal to you,

but you cause wicked people to die and go to the dark place where dead people go.

10 People do not defeat their enemies by their own strength. Yahweh, you will break into pieces those who fight against you.

You will come powerfully to punish them.

You, Yahweh, will judge people everywhere.

When you choose a king for us Israelites, you will make him strong.

Yes, when you have a leader anoint someone as our king, you will make him powerful."

11 After that, Elkanah and his family returned to their home in Ramah. But Samuel, who was still a little boy, stayed at the sacred tent to work with Eli the priest to help the people worship Yahweh.

12 Eli's two sons **were priests like their father, but they** did very bad things. That was because they did not respect Yahweh. **13** This is how they treated the people. A family would bring an animal to sacrifice to Yahweh. While the people were still boiling the meat, Eli's sons would send one of their servants over to them. The servant would be holding a large, three-pronged fork. **14** The servant would stick the fork into whatever container the people were using to boil the meat. He would use the fork to pull out whatever meat he could. He would then take that meat back to Eli's sons **, even though this was more than the law said the priests could have**. That was how they treated all of the Israelites who brought animals to sacrifice at the sacred tent in Shiloh. **15** Also, before the people cut off the fat so the priests could burn it, the servant of Eli's sons would come over to them. The servant would tell the people who were preparing the sacrifice, "Give me some meat now to take to the priest for him to roast! He wants raw meat. He will not accept boiled meat."

16 The people would say to the servant, "We will give you as much meat as you want, if you will only have the priests cut off the fat and burn it first." But the servant would answer, "No, give it to me now**, before anyone has burned the fat**. If you do not give some raw meat to me, I will take some from you forcibly!"

17 Eli's sons were committing a very serious sin that offended Yahweh personally. They were treating very disrespectfully the offerings that people were bringing to Yahweh.

18 As for Samuel, who was still a young boy, he continued to do work for Yahweh. He wore a little linen apron **that showed he was a helper at the sacred tent**. **19** Each year his mother made a new little robe for him. She took it to him when she went to Shiloh with her husband to offer their annual sacrifice. **20** Then Eli would ask God to do good things for Elkanah and his wife. He would say to Elkanah, "I hope that Yahweh will enable your wife to give birth to other children, since she brought the child here whom she asked Yahweh to give her." Then Elkanah and his family would return to their home. **21** And Yahweh helped Hannah to have three more sons and two daughters. **She raised them at home,** while Samuel **stayed in Shiloh and** grew up while doing work for Yahweh in his sacred tent.

22 Eli became very old. He heard about all the bad things that his sons were doing to the Israelite people. He heard that they were having sexual relations with the women who stayed near the sacred tent so they could help with the work there. **23** He said to them, "It is terrible

that you are doing such things! You are causing many people to complain to me about the wicked things you are doing. **24** My sons, stop it! The people who worship Yahweh have been giving me accounts of your bad behavior! **25** Suppose one person does something wrong to another person. Then God can act as a referee between them. But suppose a person does something wrong to Yahweh. Then no one can act as a referee between him and Yahweh!" But Eli's sons would not stop what they were doing, even though their father had commanded them to stop. This was because Yahweh had decided that they had already done so many wicked things that they deserved to die.

26 Samuel, however, continued to grow up, and the things that boy did pleased Yahweh and other people. **27** One day, a prophet came to Eli and spoke a message to him on behalf of Yahweh. He said, "'You know that I appeared to your ancestor Aaron when your whole family were slaves of the king of Egypt. **28** From all the tribes of the Israelite people, I chose him and his male descendants to be my priests. I appointed them to offer sacrifices on my altar, to burn incense, and to wear sacred aprons as they worked for me. I allowed them to have as their own food some of the meat from the animals that the Israelite people brought as sacrifices. **29** But you and your sons are treating with great disrespect the sacrifices and offerings that I commanded the people to bring to my sacred tent! You are letting your sons do what they want instead of making sure that all of you do what I want. You have all been getting fat from eating the best parts of all the sacrifices that my Israelite people have been bringing to me!'

30 Therefore, this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, declares: 'I definitely promised that your family would continually serve me as priests, since you are descendants of Aaron. But now,' he declares, 'I will certainly not allow you to continue to be priests. I will honor people who honor me, but I will disgrace people who treat me disrespectfully. **31** Listen carefully! There will soon be a time when I will cause all the strong young men in your family and in your clan to die. The result will be that no men in your family will live long enough to become old men. **32** The sacred tent where you serve will experience loss and neglect, even as I do good things for the people of Israel. And I repeat that no men in your family will ever live long enough to become old men. **33** I will allow some of your descendants to survive and continue to serve at my altar. But they will be so sad about what happens to the sacred tent that their eyes will get very tired from crying. And all of your descendants will die while they are still young. **34** And your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas,

will both die on the same day. That will prove to you that everything I have told you will happen.

35 I have chosen another man to be my priest. He is someone who will serve me faithfully. He will do everything I want. I will make sure that he has descendants who will be priests. He will continually be a helper to the king whom I will appoint. **36** All of your descendants who remain alive will have to go to that priest and ask him to give them money and food. They will have to ask him to allow them to work with the other priests so that they can earn money to buy food.'"

3 **1** While he was still a boy, Samuel was working for Yahweh while Eli supervised him. At that time, Yahweh did not often speak messages to people, and Yahweh did not often give visions to people.

2 By that time Eli's eyes were very weak; he was almost blind. One night he was sleeping in his room. **3** Samuel was sleeping in the sacred tent of Yahweh, where the sacred chest was. The lamp there was still burning. **4** Just then Yahweh called out to Samuel. Samuel replied, "I am ready to do whatever you ask!"

5 Then he got up and ran to Eli. He told him, "I have come because you called me. I am ready to do whatever you ask." But Eli replied, "No, I did not call you. Go back to bed." So Samuel went and lay down again.

6 Then Yahweh called out to Samuel again. So Samuel got up once more and went to Eli. He said, "I have come because you called me. I am ready to do whatever you ask." But Eli said, "No, dear boy, I did not call you. Go back and lie down."

7 **Samuel did not realize that it was Yahweh who was speaking to him because** he had not yet become personally acquainted with Yahweh. That was because Yahweh had not previously spoken to him to reveal something to him.

8 After he lay down again, Yahweh called out to Samuel yet again. So Samuel got up yet again and went to Eli. He said, "I have come because you called me. I am ready to do whatever you ask."

Then Eli realized that it was Yahweh who had been calling Samuel. **9** So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down again. If the same person calls you again, say, 'I am ready to obey you, Yahweh, so please tell me what you want me to do.'" So Samuel went back to bed and lay down. **10** Then Yahweh came and stood and called as he had done the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Please tell me what you want me to do, because I am ready to obey you."

11 Then Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen carefully! I am about to do something here in Israel that will shock everyone who hears about it. **12** There will soon be a time when I punish Eli and his family. I will do to them everything that I said I would do. **13** Eli's sons have been doing things that are so wicked that they deserve severe punishment. Eli knows they have been doing those things. But he has not disciplined them. So I told him that I would punish all future generations of his family. **14** That is why I solemnly told Eli's family, 'Even if you give me sacrifices or offerings, I will still consider you guilty of your sin and punish you for it.'"

15 Samuel stayed in bed until it became light. Then he got up and opened the doors of the building **as usual**. He was too afraid to tell Eli what Yahweh had said to him when he appeared to him. **16** But Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my dear boy**, please come here.**" Samuel **came and** told him, "I am ready to do whatever you ask."

17 Eli asked him, "What did Yahweh say to you? Please tell me honestly. If you do not tell me everything that he said to you, may God do those things and even worse things to you!"

18 So Samuel told him everything that Yahweh had said to him, without leaving anything out. Then Eli said, "**Since** it was Yahweh **who said this, I must accept it**. I am willing for him to do whatever he considers to be best."

19 As Samuel grew up, Yahweh helped him. He told Samuel accurately what he was going to do, so that everything Samuel predicted happened. **20** As a result, all the people of Israel, from the northern end of the country to the southern end, realized that Samuel was a prophet who truly spoke for Yahweh. **21** Yahweh kept appearing **to Samuel** in Shiloh. Samuel would see Yahweh speaking messages to him in visions.

4 **1** Samuel told all the people of Israel the messages that God gave him.

At that time the Israelite army went to fight against the army of the Philistine people. The Israelite army set up their tents at the place that people would later call Ebenezer. The Philistine army set up their tents near the city of Aphek. **2** The Philistine army formed a battle line, and the Israelites came and fought with them. In a great battle, the Philistines defeated the Israelites. In combat, they killed about 4,000 of the soldiers in their battle line. **3** When the remaining Israelite soldiers returned to their camp, the Israelite elders asked, "Why did Yahweh allow the Philistine army to defeat us today? **It must have been because we did not bring the sacred chest into battle with us.** We should bring the sacred chest here from Shiloh. That way we can bring it with us when we go into battle again, and it will keep our enemies from defeating us!"

4 So the soldiers sent some men to Shiloh, and those men brought back the sacred chest of Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. There were statues of winged creatures on top of the chest, and those statues were like a throne for Yahweh. Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas traveled with the sacred chest to the Israelite military camp.

5 When they saw the men bringing the sacred chest into their camp, the Israelite soldiers **were so happy that they** shouted loudly. The sound of their shout echoed throughout the land. **6** The Philistines heard this sound and asked, "What are the soldiers in the Hebrew camp shouting about?" Someone told them that **they were shouting because** men had brought the sacred chest of Yahweh into their camp. **7** They said, "A god has come into their camp **to help them fight against us**!" This made them very afraid. They said, "We are in big trouble now! Nothing like this has ever happened before! **8** We certainly are in big trouble! The gods of the Israelites are very strong, and it will be difficult to overcome their power. It was the gods of the Israelites who made the Egyptians suffer from many plagues in the barren land outside their country. **9** You Philistine soldiers must be very brave! If you do not fight bravely, **the Hebrews will defeat you and** you will become their slaves, just as they have been your slaves! So fight bravely!"

10 So the Philistine soldiers fought **very hard**, and they defeated the Israelite soldiers so badly that they all fled from the battle and ran back to their military camp. The Philistines won a big victory and killed 30,000 of the Israelite soldiers. **11** The Philistines captured the sacred chest, and they killed Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

12 On that same day, a man from the tribe of Benjamin arrived at Shiloh. He had run **with news** from the place where the armies were fighting. He had torn his clothes and thrown dirt on his head **to show that he was very sad**. **13** Eli was very anxious to know whether anything bad had happened to God's sacred chest. So he was sitting on a seat next to the road waiting for any messengers who might come with news of the battle. When the man arrived and told what had happened, the people of the city started to cry loudly.

14 Eli heard the noise and asked, "Why are people making all this noise?" So the messenger ran over to Eli and told him what had happened.

15 At that time, Eli was 98 years old, and he had become completely blind. **16** The messenger said to Eli, "I am the messenger who has come from where the armies were fighting. I ran from the battle lines earlier today." Eli asked, "What happened, young man?"

17 The messenger responded, "The Philistines defeated our army. They killed a great many of our soldiers, and the others ran away. The Philistines killed your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They also captured God's sacred chest."

18 As soon as Eli heard what had happened to the sacred chest, he fell backward off his seat beside the city gate. Because he was very old and very fat, he broke his neck when he fell, and that killed him. He had led the Israelite people for 40 years.

19 The wife of Eli's son Phinehas was pregnant, and it was almost time for her to give birth to her baby. When she heard the news that the Philistines had captured God's sacred chest and that her husband and her father-in-law had died, her labor pains suddenly began. She crouched down and gave birth. **20** **But the birth was so difficult that it caused her to die.** As she was dying, the women who were helping her tried to encourage her. They said to her, "Be brave! You have given birth to a son!" But this did not matter to her, so she said nothing in reply.

21 She named the boy Ichabod. She said, "There is no glory anymore in Israel." She was talking about how the Philistines had captured God's sacred chest and how her husband and her father-in-law had died. **22** She said that there was no glory anymore in Israel because the Philistines had captured God's sacred chest. **And then she died.**

5 **1** When the Philistine soldiers captured God's sacred chest, they took it from the area of Ebenezer, **where they had fought the Israelites,** to their city of Ashdod. **2** They carried it into the temple of their god Dagon and placed it alongside a statue of Dagon. **3** The next morning, when the people of Ashdod first got up, they **went into the temple and** saw that the statue was lying face down on the ground in front of Yahweh's sacred chest! So they picked up the statue of Dagon and put it back in its usual place. **4** But when they first got up the following morning, they saw that it was once again lying face down on the ground in front of Yahweh's sacred chest. And the statue no longer had its head or hands. Those were lying in the doorway. All it had left was its body. **5** That is the reason why, ever since that time, the priests of Dagon and everyone else who enters the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on the doorway **where the hands and head of Dagon were lying**.

6 Then Yahweh made the people of Ashdod suffer greatly. A plague **of mice** destroyed their crops, and many people in the city and in the surrounding region got unhealthy growths on their skin. **7** When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they cried out, "The god of the Israelites is severely punishing us and our god Dagon. So we cannot keep his sacred chest here!" **8** They summoned the five rulers of the Philistines and asked them, "What should we do with the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites?"

The rulers replied, "Send the sacred chest to the city of Gath." So they moved it to Gath. **9** But when they took the sacred chest to Gath, Yahweh made the people of that city suffer as well. This caused very great distress. Throughout the city, people of all ages died, and many others got unhealthy skin growths. **10** So the people of Gath moved the sacred chest to the city of Ekron.

But when some men from Gath carried the sacred chest into Ekron, the people there protested. They told the men, "You are going to cause us and our families to die by bringing the sacred chest of the god of the Israelites here!" **11** So the people of Ekron also summoned the Philistine rulers. When they came, the people said to them, "Send this sacred chest of the god of the Israelites back to its own place! Otherwise, it will cause us and our families to die!" There was great distress throughout the city because so many people were dying. God was punishing them very severely. **12** Some of the people in Ekron had already died, and the rest of

the people were suffering badly because of unhealthy growths on their skin. The people of the city were wailing so loudly that other people far away could hear them.

6 **1** The people of Philistia kept Yahweh's sacred chest in their area for seven months.

2 Then they summoned their priests and their fortunetellers. They asked them, "We want to know how we should treat the sacred chest of Yahweh. Tell us what gift we should send with it back to its own land."

3 Those men replied, "Since you are going to return the sacred chest of Israel's God, you must send a gift with it to show him that you are sorry for taking it. If you do that and your unhealthy skin growths go away, you will know for sure that it was Israel's God who was making you suffer, because you took his sacred chest."

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

Those men replied, "Since you people and your five rulers have suffered in the same ways, send the same number of gifts as the number of your rulers. Make five gold models of the unhealthy growths on your skin and five gold models of mice. **5** Make models that represent the unhealthy skin growths and the mice that have been devouring your crops. Make them in order to honor the God of the Israelite people. If you do that, perhaps he will stop punishing you, your gods, and your land. **6** Do not be stubborn as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were. Remember that Yahweh finally made them suffer more than they could bear, and that they then allowed the Israelites to leave their land.

7 So this is what we advise you to do. Build a brand-new cart. Then get two cows that have very recently given birth to calves. They must be cows on which no one has ever put a yoke. Hitch those cows to the new cart. But keep their calves from following them by putting them securely in their pens. **8** Put their God's sacred chest on the cart along with the gold models you are sending to him. Put them in a small box alongside the sacred chest. These gold objects will be an offering to acknowledge to the God of the Israelites that he was right to punish you for taking his sacred chest. Then send the cows down the road and let them go wherever they want. **9** Then watch the cart as the cows pull it. If they pull it back into the territory of the Israelites, to the town of Beth Shemesh, then we will know that it was their God who caused these terrible plagues to afflict us. But if the cows do not pull the cart there, then we will know

that the God of the Israelites has not been punishing us for taking his sacred chest. We will know that it was just a coincidence that we got unhealthy skin growths and mice ate our crops at the same time."

10 So the people did what the priests and diviners told them to do. They got two cows that had just had calves and were nursing them. They hitched them to a new cart that they made. But they put those calves securely in their pens. **11** Then they put Yahweh's sacred chest in the cart along with a box containing the gold models they had made of the mice and the skin growths. **12** Then the cows started walking, and they went straight down the road that led to Beth Shemesh. **Even though no one had ever yoked them before,** they did not pull in different directions. They were mooing the whole time **because they were distressed about their calves,** but they kept going forward down the road. The five rulers of the Philistine cities followed the cows until they reached the outskirts of Beth Shemesh.

13 At that time, the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley outside their city. When the cows came along the road, they looked up and saw the sacred chest on the cart the cows were pulling. They were extremely happy when they saw it. **14-15** The cows pulled the cart into the field of a man whose name was Joshua who lived in Beth Shemesh. They stopped alongside a large rock. Several men from the tribe of Levi lifted from the cart the sacred chest and the box next to it that contained the gold models. They put all those things on the large rock. Then the people smashed the cart and kindled a fire with the wood from it. They slaughtered the cows and burned their bodies on the fire completely as an offering to Yahweh. That day the people of Beth Shemesh offered to Yahweh many sacrifices that they completely burned and many other sacrifices. **16** The five rulers of the Philistines watched the Israelites do these things. Then they returned to Ekron on that same day.

17 The Philistines had sent five gold models of skin growths as an offering to Yahweh to acknowledge that he was right to punish them for taking his sacred chest. The five gold models represented the people of their five cities: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. **18** The five gold models of mice were gifts from the people of the five cities that the five Philistine leaders rule. This included the people who lived in those cities and those who lived in the surrounding towns, all the way to **the border between Philistia and Israel that** the large rock **at Beth Shemesh marked**. People would later give that rock the name Abel. Men from the tribe of

Levi placed the sacred chest on top of that rock. It is still there in the field that belonged to the man whose name was Joshua who lived in Beth Shemesh.

19 But some of the people who lived in Beth Shemesh looked into Yahweh's sacred chest. Because of that, Yahweh caused 50,070 of them to die. The others who lived there mourned greatly because Yahweh had killed so many of those people. **20** Then the people who lived in Beth Shemesh said, "Since Yahweh is such a holy God, he will eventually kill all of us **to punish us for being sinful** if his sacred chest remains here! We must send his sacred chest to the people who live in some other place!"

21 They sent messengers to the people who lived in the city of Kiriath Jearim. They told them, "The people of Philistia have sent Yahweh's sacred chest back to us. Come here and take it to your city."

7 **1** When the men of Kiriath Jearim received the message, they came to Beth Shemesh and took the sacred chest of Yahweh. They took it to the house of a man whose name was Abinadab. He lived on a hill. They gave Abinadab's son Eleazar the special duty of taking care of the chest.

2 The sacred chest remained in Kiriath Jearim for a long time, for 20 years. During that time, the Israelite people were very sorry that Yahweh was not helping them anymore.

3 Then Samuel said to all the Israelite people, "If you truly want Yahweh to be your God again, you must get rid of the idols you have that represent foreign gods. You must also get rid of the statues you have that represent the goddess Ashtoreth. You must resolve to worship only Yahweh. If you do that, he will enable you to stop the Philistines from oppressing you." **4** So the Israelites got rid of all their statues of the gods Baal and Ashtoreth, and they began to worship only Yahweh.

5 Then Samuel told them, "I want you Israelites to assemble at Mizpah. I will pray to Yahweh for you there." **6** So the Israelites assembled at Mizpah. They got water from a well and poured it out on the ground in Yahweh's presence. They did not eat any food on that day. They confessed that they had sinned against Yahweh. There at Mizpah Samuel settled disputes among the Israelites and made sure that they were obeying Yahweh.

7 When the Philistines learned that the Israelite people had assembled at Mizpah, their
rulers led their armies to attack the Israelites. When the Israelites learned that the Philistines
were approaching them to attack them, they became very afraid. 8 They told Samuel, “Please
keep on praying to Yahweh our God for us so that he will rescue us from the Philistine army!”
9 So Samuel took a young lamb that was still nursing, and he killed it and offered it to Yahweh
as a sacrifice by burning it up entirely on the altar. Then he pleaded with Yahweh to help the
Israelites, and Yahweh did what he asked.

10 While Samuel was still burning the lamb as an offering, the Philistine army came near
to attack the Israelites. But Yahweh caused it to thunder very loudly. The soldiers in the
Philistine army became so frightened that they could no longer fight effectively. So the
Israelite soldiers were able to defeat them completely. 11 The Israelite men rushed out of
Mizpah and killed many Philistine soldiers who were trying to run away. They chased them all
the way to the bottom of the hill on which people had built the town of Beth Kar.

12 After the battle, Samuel got a large stone and set it up between the city of Mizpah and
the rocky cliff of Shen. He named the stone Ebenezer. He said, “Yahweh has helped us to
defeat our enemies this far.” 13 So the Israelites defeated the Philistines, and they stopped
invading the land of Israel. During the time that Samuel was alive, Yahweh kept powerfully
helping the Israelites defend themselves against the Philistines.

14 The Philistines had previously captured some towns that belonged to the Israelites. But
the Israelite army was now able to recapture those towns. They were around the Philistine
cities of Ekron and Gath. The Israelites recaptured the whole area right up to the limits of those
cities. The Amorites also did not attack the Israelites during this time.

15 Samuel continued to be the leader of the Israelite people until he died. 16 Every year
Samuel traveled around to the cities of Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. In those cities, he listened
to disputes between people and settled them. 17 After he settled disputes in each of those
cities, he would return to Ramah, where he lived. He also listened to people’s disputes there
and settled them. He built an altar at Ramah **so that he could offer sacrifices to Yahweh**.

8 1 When Samuel became old, he appointed his sons to lead the people of Israel. 2 Samuel
had two sons. Joel was his older son and Abijah was his younger son. They settled people’s

disputes in the town of Beersheba. **3** But Joel and Abijah were not honest like their father. They only wanted to get a lot of money. They accepted bribes, and they did not make honest decisions about people's disputes.

4 Finally, the Israelite leaders met in the town of Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. **5** The leaders said to Samuel, "Now listen! You are now old, and your sons are not honest like you. So give us a king to rule over us, like the kings that other countries have!"

6 Samuel thought it was wrong for them to ask him to give them a king to rule them. So he prayed to Yahweh about it. **7** Yahweh answered him, "Do everything that these leaders have asked you to do. But recognize that by asking for a king, they are not really refusing to have your family continue to lead them. They are actually refusing to have me continue to be their king. **8** This is just like what they have been doing ever since I brought them out of Egypt. They have rejected me and worshiped other gods. Now they are also rejecting you in the same way. **9** So this is what I want you to do. Appoint a king for them as they have asked. But warn them clearly and explain to them what privileges this king will claim for himself!"

10 So Samuel told the Israelite leaders who were asking him for a king what Yahweh had told him. **11** He said, "If a king rules over you, this is what he will do to you. He will force many of your sons to serve in his army as chariot drivers or as soldiers on horseback. He will make a large group of your sons run in front of his chariot. **12** He will make some of your sons officers who will command groups of a thousand soldiers or groups of fifty soldiers. But he will force others to plow his fields and then later harvest his crops. He will force still others to make military weapons and equipment for his chariots. **13** The king will also make some of your daughters work for him. They will have to make perfumes and cook food and bake bread for him. **14** He will seize your best fields and vineyards and olive groves so that he can give them to his attendants. **15** The king will take one tenth of the grain and wine that you produce and distribute it among his own officers and attendants. **16** He will also claim your best male and female servants and the strong young men in your household and make them work for him. He will also take your donkeys and use them to carry loads for him. **17** He will take one tenth of your sheep and goats. It will be as if you are his slaves. **18** When all of this happens, you will complain loudly about the king whom you yourselves have chosen. But when that happens, Yahweh will make you keep serving the king you are complaining about."

19 But despite everything Samuel told them, the people stubbornly insisted that they did
not want any ruler other than a king. 20 They told him, “We want to be like the other nations.
We want a king to rule us and to lead our soldiers to fight against our enemies.”

21 When Samuel heard everything that the people had said, he repeated it to Yahweh for
him to hear. 22 Yahweh answered him, “Do what they are asking you to do. Appoint someone
to be their king.” So Samuel told the Israelite elders that they could all go home, because he
would arrange for them to have a king.

9 1 Now there was a rich and influential man whose name was Kish. He belonged to the
tribe of Benjamin. Kish was the son of Abiel, the grandson of Zeror, the great-grandson of
Becorath, and the great-great-grandson of Aphiah. Kish lived within the territory of the tribe of
Benjamin. 2 Kish had a son whose name was Saul. He was a handsome young man. In fact, he
was one of the most attractive Israelite young men. He was also much taller than most other
men.

3 Saul’s father Kish owned some female donkeys, and one day they wandered off. So Kish
told Saul, “Take one of the servants with you and go and look for those donkeys.” 4 So Saul
did that. He took a servant, and they walked through the hilly area where the descendants of
Ephraim lived, and then they went through the regions of Shalishah and Shaalim, and then they
went through all the region belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, but they could not find the
donkeys.

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

6 But the servant told Saul, “I have another idea. Please listen to it. One of God’s prophets
lives in this city. People respect him very much because everything he predicts comes true. Let
us go and speak with him. Perhaps he can tell us where we should go to find the donkeys.”

7 Saul replied to the servant, “I agree that we should go and speak with him, but what can
we give him as a gift? We have no more food in our sacks, and I do not know of something
else we could give him. Do we have anything else with us?”

8 In response, the servant told Saul, “Actually, I do have a small piece of silver that I can give to the prophet. **That way we can speak with him** and he will tell us where we should go to find the donkeys.” **9-11** Saul told his servant, “That is a good idea. Let us go and speak with him.” So they went to the city where the prophet lived. As they were going up the hill into the city, they met some young women who were coming out of the city to get some water from a well. They asked the women, “Is the seer currently in the city?” (They said that because at that time, when people in Israel wanted a message from God, they would say, “Let us go and speak with the seer.” They used the term “seer” to refer to the same kind of person whom people now call a “prophet.”) **12** The women replied, “Yes, he is in the city. In fact, he is just ahead of you. If you walk fast, you will catch up with him. He came back to the city this very day because the people will be gathering today on the hill to worship God, and he is going to bless the sacrifice of the animal that will provide the meat for this festival. **13** You should find him just inside the city. He will not have gone up the hill yet to take part in the festival, because **first the people will prepare the feast, and then** he will come and bless the sacrifice. The guests will only start eating after he does that. So if you hurry, you will find him there right now.”

14 So Saul and the servant went to the city. As they were on their way in, amazingly, Samuel was coming from the opposite direction and met them. He was on his way to the hill where the people were going to hold their festival.

15 On the previous day, Yahweh had told Samuel, **16** “I will arrange for a man to arrive here at this time tomorrow from the land where the descendants of Benjamin live. I want you to pour olive oil on his head to show that I have chosen him to be the leader of my Israelite people. I have listened to them as they have called out to me for help, and I have seen how they are suffering. This man will rescue my people from the control of the Philistines.”

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

18 As Saul was going in the city gate and Samuel was coming out of it, Saul went over to Samuel **without realizing who he was** and asked him, “Would you please tell me where the house of the seer is?”

19 Samuel replied, “I am the seer. Now go ahead of me with your servant to the hill where the people are going to hold their festival. Both of you will be my guests today at the feast.

Tomorrow morning I will tell you everything you want to know, and then I will send you home. **20** Also, do not worry anymore about those donkeys of yours that wandered away a couple of days ago. Someone has found them. But let us consider that the Israelites are looking for a king. You are the king they are looking for. You and your extended family will rule the Israelites."

21 Saul replied, "I am from the tribe of Benjamin, which is the smallest of all the Israelite tribes! Beyond that, my clan is the least important clan in that tribe! So I do not understand why you have spoken to me about becoming the king of Israel."

22 But **even though Saul had objected**, Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the large room where the feast would be. About 30 people were guests at the feast, but Samuel had Saul and his servant sit in the seats where the most important guests would sit. **23** Then Samuel told the cook, "Serve **my guest here** the special piece of meat that I gave you and that I told you to set aside."

24 So the cook brought the leg he had set aside, with its adjoining meat, and he served it to Saul. Samuel said to Saul, "We have just served you the special portion that we set aside for you. Please go ahead and start eating it. When I told the cook that I had invited people to this feast, I also told him to save this portion of the meat so that you could have it when you came." So Saul ate the festive meal that day as Samuel's guest.

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

26 Saul slept that night in a sheltered bed on the roof. Early the next morning, as the sun was rising, Samuel called up to him, "Get up! It is time for me to send you back home." Once Saul had gotten up, he and Samuel left the house together.

27 When they got to the edge of the city, Samuel told Saul to send his servant on ahead of them. After the servant left, Samuel said to Saul, "I want you to stay here for a few minutes so that I can give you a message I have received from God for you."

10 **1** Then Samuel took a small jar of olive oil and poured some of it on Saul's head. Then he kissed Saul **on the cheek**. He told him, "I am doing this because Yahweh has chosen you to

be the leader of his Israelite people. **2** When you leave here today and start to return home, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb near the town of Zelzah in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'Someone has found the donkeys that you were looking for. But now your father is more worried about you. He is saying that he is concerned that you have become lost yourself, and he does not know how to find you.'

3 After leaving Zelzah and continuing your journey, you will arrive at the large oak tree near the town of Tabor. There you will see three men coming toward you. They will be on their way to worship God at Bethel. One of them will be leading three young goats. Another one will be carrying three loaves of bread. The last one will be carrying a container of wine.
4 They will ask how you are doing, and then they will offer you two of the loaves of bread. Accept them.

5 Finally you will get **back home** to the city of Gibeah where there is a hill on which people worship God and where there is also a camp where Philistine soldiers stay. As you enter the city, you will meet a group of prophets. They will be coming down from the place of worship that is on top of the hill. Prophets playing music on harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres will be leading them. The prophets will be speaking and singing as God inspires them. **6** When you meet them, the Spirit of Yahweh will powerfully influence you, and you too will speak and sing as God inspires you. This will affect you so much that you will become like a different person. **7** After these things happen, God will be helping you, so do what you think is the right thing to do in each situation.

8 But I would like you to meet me at the city of Gilgal. Listen carefully. I will come there and offer some sacrifices that I will burn completely and other sacrifices for a festive meal that we will share. Wait one week for me to arrive. When I come, I will tell you what other things you should do."

9 Just as Saul started to walk away from Samuel, God changed Saul's inner being. And all the things that Samuel had predicted happened that same day. **10** When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, right away they met a group of prophets. God's Spirit influenced Saul powerfully, and he began to speak and sing as the prophets were also doing. **11** The people who had known Saul previously were surprised to see that he was speaking and singing as the

prophets were doing. They said to each other, “How has this happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul really one of the prophets?”

12 One of the men who lived there replied, “These other men did not become prophets because of who their fathers were.” And that is why, **when a person achieves something that people would not have expected based on his background,** people say, “Is Saul really one of the prophets?” **13** After Saul finished speaking and singing as God inspired him, he went up to the hill near the city where the people worshiped God.

14 When Saul’s uncle saw him there, he asked him and his servant, “Where have you been?” Saul replied, “We went to look for the donkeys. When we could not find them, we went to ask Samuel if he could tell us where they were.”

15 Saul’s uncle asked, “What did Samuel tell you?”

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

17 Then Samuel told the people of Israel to gather at Mizpah to hear a message from Yahweh. **18** After they arrived, he said to them, “Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, has a message for you. He says, ‘I brought you Israelite people out of Egypt. I rescued your ancestors from the power of the rulers of Egypt, and I have rescued you from all the other kings who have oppressed you since then.’ **19** But even though he rescues you from all the difficulties you encounter, now you no longer want God to be the one who rules you. Instead, you have asked him to select a man to rule you as king. **So that Yahweh can indicate what man he is choosing,** I want representatives of your tribes and clans to come forward and stand here in the presence of Yahweh.”

20 When the representatives of the Israelite tribes approached, Samuel threw a lot, and God made it indicate that he had chosen someone from the tribe of Benjamin. **21** Then Samuel had the representatives of the clans of the tribe of Benjamin come forward. Samuel threw another lot, and God made it indicate that he had chosen someone from the clan of Matri. Samuel threw another lot, and God made it indicate that he had chosen Saul son of Kish from that clan. But when they looked for Saul, no one could find him. **22** So they asked Yahweh,

“Can we not find Saul because he has not arrived here yet?” Yahweh replied, “I will tell you where he is. He is hiding under the baggage.”

23 So they quickly went there and found Saul. They had him stand in front of all the people. They observed how much taller he was than other men**, and this impressed them**.
24 Then Samuel said to all the people there, “This is the king whom Yahweh has chosen for you. Certainly he is taller and stronger than any other Israelite!” All the people shouted, “May God keep this king alive!”

25 Then Samuel told the people what the responsibilities of the king would be and what responsibilities they would have toward him. He wrote all those things in a scroll. He placed the scroll for safekeeping in a location where people worshiped Yahweh. Then Samuel sent all the people home.

26 Saul returned to his home in the city of Gibeah. A group of strong soldiers decided to accompany Saul continually. They did that because God had motivated each of them to do it.
27 But some bad men said, “A man like him will not be able to save us from our enemies!” They did not think he would make a good king, and they refused to give him any gifts **to show that they would be loyal to him**. But **even though Saul knew about their insult,** he said nothing about it at the time.

11 **1** Then Nahash king of the Ammonites led his army to attack the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead. The leaders of the people who lived in that city went to speak with Nahash. They told him, “We want to make a peace treaty with you. We are all willing to become your subjects.”

2 Nahash replied, “I will make a peace treaty with you on one condition. You must allow my soldiers to gouge out your right eyes. This will bring shame on all the Israelites **because it will show that they were not able to defend you**.”

3 The leaders of Jabesh replied, “Please do not attack us for the next seven days. During that time, we will send messengers throughout the land of Israel **to ask for help**. If no one comes to help us, then we will surrender to you.”

4 **Nahash agreed, and** the messengers went **throughout Israel, including to** to Gibeah, the city where Saul lived, and they told the people there about the situation. Everyone started to cry loudly. **5** Just then Saul returned home. He had been plowing his field with his oxen. **He heard the noise and** he asked, "Why are all the people crying so loudly?" Then someone told him what the messengers from Jabesh had reported.

6 Then God's Spirit influenced Saul powerfully. He became extremely angry when he heard what Nahash wanted to do. **7** Saul took two of his oxen and killed them and cut them into pieces. Then he sent messengers carrying those pieces throughout the land of Israel to tell people this message: "Saul says that if anyone refuses to come with him and Samuel to fight against the Ammonite army, he will cut that person's oxen into pieces, just as he has cut these oxen into pieces!" The men of Israel realized that Yahweh wanted them to go and fight the Ammonites and that Yahweh would be angry with them and punish them if they did not. So the Israelite men all agreed to fight. **8** Saul assembled his army at the city of Bezek. When he counted the troops, he learned that there were 30,000 soldiers there from the tribe of Judah and 300,000 soldiers from the other Israelite tribes.

9 So Saul and Samuel sent the messengers back to the people at Jabesh Gilead to tell them, "We will come and rescue you tomorrow by the middle of the morning." The messengers went and told this to the people of Jabesh. They became very happy when they heard this news.
10 Then the leaders of Jabesh told Nahash, "We will surrender to you tomorrow, and then you can do to us whatever you want."

11 That night Saul divided his troops into three groups. They marched all night and arrived at the city before the sun rose the next morning. They attacked the camp of the Ammonite soldiers **from three different directions**. By noontime they had killed most of them. Those who survived ran away, and none of them regrouped to continue fighting.

12 Then the soldiers said to Samuel, "Now who were those men who said that they did not want Saul to be our king? Bring them here so that we can kill them!"

13 But Saul replied, "No, we are not going to execute anyone today, because on this day Yahweh has saved us Israelite people from our enemies. **This is a day to rejoice, not to kill anyone.**"

14 Then Samuel said to the people, “Let us all go to Gilgal, and there we will proclaim again that Saul is our king.” **15** So they went to Gilgal. In that place where people worshiped Yahweh and considered that he was present, they proclaimed again that Saul was their king. Then they offered sacrifices there to show Yahweh how grateful they were for his help. And Saul and all the other Israelite people at the gathering were very happy.

12 **1** Then Samuel told all the Israelite people, “Now listen. I have given you a king to rule you. So I have now done everything you asked me to do. **2** And that king is now ruling you, as you can see. I have become too old to keep being the leader of Israel. You can tell that from my gray hair. You can also tell that from the fact that my sons are fully grown. I have been your leader ever since I was a boy. **3** If I have wronged anyone, tell me now while I stand before you. Do that while Yahweh is listening and while the king whom he has chosen is listening. Have I stolen an ox or donkey from anyone during all those years? Have I cheated anyone? Have I treated anyone badly? Have I accepted a bribe from anyone in exchange for ignoring the wrong things he was doing? If I have done any of these things, tell me, and I will repay anything I took.”

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

5 Then Samuel told them, “Yahweh has heard you say this, and the king whom he has chosen has also heard you say this just now. You agree that I have not taken anything from anyone. **So you must also agree that they may punish anyone who later claims differently.**” The Israelites replied, “We acknowledge that Yahweh and the king have heard us say this **and that they may punish anyone who later claims differently**!”

6 Samuel then told them, “Yahweh was the one who appointed Moses and Aaron to lead our ancestors. He is the one who rescued our ancestors from slavery in Egypt. **7** Now while Yahweh is listening, stand there as defendants while I make the case that you should not have asked for a king instead of trusting Yahweh to rescue you. I will do that by reminding you of all the times when Yahweh rescued you and your ancestors.

8 When the Egyptians forced the Israelites to serve them as slaves, our ancestors pleaded with Yahweh to help them. Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron to rescue them from slavery and to bring them to this land, where they settled.

9 But our ancestors stopped being loyal to Yahweh as their God. So he allowed Sisera to defeat them. Sisera was the commander of the army of King Jabin, who ruled from the city of Hazor. Yahweh also allowed the armies of the Philistines and of the king of Moab to defeat our ancestors. **10** Then our ancestors pleaded with Yahweh to help them. They admitted, 'Yahweh, we have sinned by forsaking you. We have worshiped idols that represent the god Baal and the goddess Ashtoreth. But if you rescue us from our enemies, we will worship you alone.' **11** So Yahweh sent men such as Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and me. We rescued you from the control of the enemies that surrounded you. As a result, you were able to live safely in this land again.

12 But when you saw that King Nahash of Ammon had come with his army to attack you, you were afraid. So you came to me and said, 'Now we want a **warrior** king to lead us.' You said that even though Yahweh your God was already your king! **13** Nevertheless, Yahweh has now appointed a king for you. So look, here is the king you wanted and asked for. **14** If you respect Yahweh and worship him as your God, and if you do what he tells you to do and not disobey what he says, then Yahweh your God will protect you and your king from your enemies. **15** But if you do not do what Yahweh tells you to do and you disobey what he says, then he will help your enemies to defeat you, just as he did to our ancestors.

16 Now stand here quietly and look at the great thing that Yahweh is about to do while you watch. **17** It is currently the time when you harvest your wheat crop **and ordinarily there is no rain**. But I will ask Yahweh to send a thunderstorm and make it rain. When you see that, you will realize that Yahweh considers that you have done a very wicked thing by requesting a king of your own."

18 Then Samuel prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused a thunderstorm to happen right then. This made all the people very afraid of Yahweh and of Samuel.

19 They cried out to Samuel, “We have sinned further against Yahweh by wickedly asking
for a king of our own! So pray for us and ask Yahweh, the God you represent, not to kill us for
doing that!”

20 Samuel told them, “Do not be afraid! You have done this evil thing just as I described,
but do not stop living the way Yahweh wants you to live. Instead, serve Yahweh with complete
commitment. 21 Do not abandon Yahweh and worship useless idols. Because they are truly
useless, they can not benefit you or rescue you from your enemies. 22 Yahweh wants everyone
in the world to know what a faithful God he is. So he will not abandon us after he gladly chose
us to be his own people. 23 For my part, you can be sure that I will keep praying for you. If I
did not, I would be sinning against Yahweh. I will also continue to teach you what the right
things are to do. 24 But you must honor Yahweh and serve him genuinely with complete
commitment. Bear in mind all the great things that he has done for you. 25 But you can be sure
that if you do wicked things, Yahweh will destroy you and your king!”

13 1 Saul was 30 years old when he began to rule the Israelites as their king, and he ruled
them for 42 years.

2 After returning from defeating the Ammonites at Jabesh Gilead, Saul chose 3,000 of the
Israelite men who had fought them to become a regular army. He sent the other men back
home. Of the soldiers Saul chose, 2,000 stayed with him at Michmash and in the hilly area near
the city of Bethel. The other 1,000 stayed with his son Jonathan at the city of Gibeah within the
territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

3 Jonathan and the men who were with him attacked the Philistine soldiers who had
camped at Geba. The Philistine rulers heard what they did and planned to attack in response.
Saul expected this and sent messengers to blow horns throughout Israel and tell the people what
was happening. 4 The other Israelites heard the news that Saul’s army had attacked a camp of
Philistine soldiers and that this had made the Philistines very angry with the Israelites. The
messengers told the rest of the fighting men to join Saul and his soldiers at Gilgal.

5 Then the Philistines mobilized their army to attack the Israelites. The Philistines had
3,000 chariots and 6,000 soldiers on horseback. They seemed to have too many footsoldiers to
count, like the grains of sand on the seashore. The Philistines came and set up their tents near

the city of Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. **6** The Israelite soldiers realized that they were in a very dangerous situation because the Philistines would be able to attack them from there and harm them greatly. So many of them **fled and** hid in caves or bushes or climbed up onto high rocks or hid in ditches or holes in the ground. **7** Some of them crossed the Jordan River and went to the area where the descendants of Gad lived and to the region of Gilead.

But Saul stayed at Gilgal. All the soldiers who were with him were shaking because they were so afraid. **8** Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days for him to come and offer sacrifices, and so he did. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal during that time, and meanwhile many of the soldiers in Saul's remaining army were leaving him and running away. **9** So Saul told the soldiers, "Bring me an animal that I can burn completely on the altar **to express our complete dedication to Yahweh**. Also bring me animals that we can sacrifice **and whose meat we can share at a meal to celebrate and thank Yahweh for the victory we expect he will enable us to win**." So his soldiers brought him these animals, and he burned the first one completely on the altar.
10 When Saul had nearly completed burning this animal, suddenly Samuel arrived. Saul went over to greet him.

11 Samuel **saw what Saul had done, and he** said to Saul, "You should not have sacrificed that animal yourself!" Saul replied, "I saw that my soldiers were leaving me and running away. You did not come here by the time you said you would come. Meanwhile, the Philistines had mobilized their army at Michmash **and were threatening us dangerously**.

12 So I thought, 'Soon the Philistine army will attack us here at Gilgal, but I have not yet asked Yahweh to help us.' So I felt it was necessary to offer the burnt offering myself."

13 Samuel told Saul, "That was a very foolish thing to do! You did not obey what Yahweh, your God, commanded about sacrifices. If you had obeyed him, Yahweh would have allowed you and your descendants to rule Israel for a long time. **14** But now, after you die, none of your descendants will become king. That is because you have not obeyed what Yahweh told you to do, Yahweh has found someone else who will do what he wants him to do. He has decided to make that person the next king of Israel."

15 Then Samuel left Gilgal and went to the city of Gibeah that is in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Saul counted the soldiers he still had with him and he discovered that there were only about 600 of them who had not run away.

16 Saul and his son Jonathan and the soldiers who were with them went to an area near the city of Geba in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin and set up their tents there. The Philistine army had set up their tents at Michmash. 17 The Philistines sent out three groups of soldiers to make raids on Israelite towns. One group went north toward the city of Ophrah in the region of Shual. 18 Another group went west towards the city of Beth Horon. The third group went east toward the area above the Zeboim Valley, beyond which there is a desolate area.

19 The Philistines did not want the Israelites (whom they called Hebrews) to be able to make any swords or spears. So they did not allow any Israelites to be metalworkers. 20 As a result, whenever the Israelites needed someone to sharpen their plow blades, picks, axes, or sickles, they had to bring them to a Philistine man who could sharpen them. 21 The Israelites had to pay about eight grams of silver to get such a man to sharpen their plow blades, picks, forks with three prongs, or sickles or to straighten the goads they used to drive their oxen.

22 As a result, none of the 600 men who were with Saul and Jonathan had swords or spears that they could use to fight the Philistines. Only Saul and Jonathan, his son, had swords and spears.

23 The Philistines sent some of their soldiers to guard the mountain pass outside Michmash.

14 1 One day, Saul's son Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "I want to attack the Philistine soldiers who are staying on the other side of the valley from us, and I want you to help me do that." But Jonathan did not tell his father what he wanted to do.

2 Saul was staying in the outskirts of the city of Gibeah, under the pomegranate tree in the neighborhood of Migron. He had about 600 soldiers with him. 3 Ahijah the priest was also there, wearing a sacred apron.

Ahijah's father Ahitub was the older brother of Ichabod. Ahijah's grandfather was Phinehas, and his great-grandfather was Eli. Eli had been Yahweh's priest at Shiloh. None of the soldiers knew that Jonathan had left the Israelite camp.

4 Jonathan recognized a route that he and the young man could follow to cross through the valley that was between them and the Philistine army. But they would have to climb over a huge rock when they first went into the valley, and they would have to climb over another huge rock as they came out of it. People called one of the rocks Bozez, and they called the other rock Seneh. **5** Bozez would be at the north end of their route, as they approached Michmash, and Seneh would be at the south end of their route, as they were leaving Geba.

6 Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "Come with me. We will go to where those pagans have set up their tents. Perhaps Yahweh will help us. It does not matter to him that there are only two of us, rather than many soldiers. Yahweh can still enable us to defeat them."

7 The young man who was carrying Jonathan's weapons said, "Go ahead and do what you are planning. Go across the valley, and I will come with you and help you do what you want to do."

8 Then Jonathan said, "Very well then, come with me. As we are crossing the valley to where the Philistine army is, we will allow their soldiers to see us. **9** If they **see us and** call out to us, 'You two stay there until we come down to you,' we will stay where we are and not try to climb up and fight them. **10** But if they **see us and** call out to us, 'Come up here,' that will show us that Yahweh is going to enable us to defeat them. In that case, we will climb up and fight them."

11 While the two of them were crossing the valley, the Philistine soldiers noticed them coming. They said to each other, "Look! Some Hebrews are crawling out of the holes in which they were hiding!" **12** Then some Philistine soldiers called out to Jonathan and the young man who carried his weapons, "Come up here, and we will show you how real soldiers fight!"

Jonathan said to the young man who was with him, "**Because they said that,** now we know that Yahweh is going to help us to defeat them! So let us climb up and fight them. I will go first." **13** So Jonathan climbed up out of the valley to the Philistine camp. He had to use both his hands and his feet because the ground was so steep. The young man climbed up after him. When Jonathan got to the top, he fought all the Philistine soldiers who approached him, and he killed them. The young man followed Jonathan into the camp of the Philistines, and he also

fought and killed their soldiers. **14** In this initial attack, the two of them killed about 20 soldiers as they advanced about 30 meters into the Philistine camp.

15 This made the other Philistine soldiers in that camp panic. **When they ran back to the main camp at Michmash and described what happened**, the soldiers in the main camp also panicked. **When those soldiers told** soldiers in other camps and the groups of soldiers who were making raids, they also panicked. Then God caused the ground to shake, and all of them became even more afraid.

16 Saul's soldiers in the city of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin included lookouts. **When they heard the noise in the Philistine camp,** they looked to see what was happening. They saw that the Philistine army was dispersing and that its soldiers were running away in all directions. **17** **Saul realized that some of his soldiers must have attacked the Philistine army.** So he told his officers, "Check to see which of our soldiers are not here." So they checked, and they found that Jonathan and the young man who carried his weapons were not there.

18 Now the Israelite army had the sacred chest with it at that time. So Saul told Ahijah the priest, "Bring the sacred chest here **so that I can use it to consult Yahweh**." **19** But while Saul was still talking to Ahijah, the noise coming from the Philistine camp kept getting louder. So Saul told him, "Stop what you are doing."

20 Then Saul gathered his whole army and they went to fight the Philistines. They found that the Philistine army had become so disorganized that its soldiers were killing each other with their swords. **21** Some of the Hebrew soldiers had earlier deserted their army and joined the Philistine army. They were in different areas throughout the Philistine camp. But now those men helped Saul and Jonathan and the other Israelite soldiers fight against the Philistines. **22** Some other Israelite soldiers had also deserted and hidden in the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lived. But when they heard that the Philistine soldiers were running away, they came and joined the other Israelite soldiers and also chased the Philistine soldiers. **23** So Yahweh rescued the Israelites on that day. The Israelite soldiers chased the Philistines all the way to the city of Beth Aven and beyond it.

24 But **the Israelites did not win as great a victory as they could have, because** the Israelite soldiers became weak **from hunger** that day. That was because Saul had made the soldiers swear something. He had made them all say, "May Yahweh make bad things happen to any of

us who eats any food before this evening, before we get revenge on our enemies!" So none of the Israelite soldiers ate any food, and this made them weak.

25 As the Israelite troops kept pursuing the Philistines, they went into a forest where bees had made honeycombs in the trees. Honey from those combs was flowing onto the ground.
26 When the Israelite troops came into that forest, they saw the honey flowing. But because they were afraid of the curse that Saul had shouted out, none of them ate any of the honey.
27 But because he had left the camp early that morning, Jonathan did not know that his father had made the soldiers swear that they would not eat any food before evening. So when he saw a honeycomb in a tree, he reached out with the end of the spear he was holding and collected some honey. He ate that honey, and it was evident from his appearance that afterward he felt stronger.

28 But one of the Israelite soldiers saw him eating the honey and said to him, "Your father made all the soldiers swear not to eat any food today. So none of us has eaten anything, and as a result we soldiers are weak." 29 Jonathan exclaimed, "My father has made things more difficult for the soldiers in our army! You can tell from my appearance that I feel stronger after eating some of this honey. 30 If only he had allowed us today to eat some of the food that we captured from our enemies while we were pursuing them! Then we would have felt stronger and been able to kill many more of those Philistine soldiers!"

31 The Israelite soldiers pursued and killed Philistine soldiers all that day, from their camp near Michmash all the way west to the city of Aijalon. But the Israelite soldiers became very weak because they had not eaten anything. 32 The Israelites had captured many sheep and cattle, including their calves, that the Philistine soldiers had abandoned. Because they were extremely hungry, they acted like wild birds gobbling up the carcass of an animal. They butchered some of those animals right on the ground, and they ate the meat without first draining the blood from the animals. 33 One of the soldiers told Saul, "Look! The soldiers are eating meat that still has blood in it. Yahweh told us not to do that, so they are sinning!"

Saul told all the soldiers, "You are breaking a law that Yahweh gave us when he made his agreement with us! Roll a large stone over here right now!"

34 Some soldiers rolled over a large stone, and then Saul told his officers, "Go around and tell all of our soldiers that each of them must bring any ox or sheep that they wish to eat here

where I am. Each one must slaughter it on this large stone **and drain the blood. Then** he can eat the meat. They must not sin against Yahweh by eating meat from an animal without draining its blood." So that evening each of the soldiers led the animals they wanted to eat over to the great stone, and there they slaughtered them **and drained the blood before eating them**. **35** Then Saul built an altar that he dedicated to Yahweh **as a monument to commemorate this victory over the Philistines**. That was the first time he built something as an altar for Yahweh.

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

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

But Ahijah the priest said, "We should ask God what he wants us to." **37** So **with Ahijah's help,** Saul asked God, "Should we keep chasing the Philistine soldiers? Will you enable us Israelites to defeat them?" But God did not answer Saul when he asked this.

38 Then Saul summoned all the leaders of his army. He said to them, "**Since God has not answered me,** we must carefully investigate how someone committed a sin today. **39** I swear by Yahweh, who has just rescued us Israelites, that we will certainly execute whoever has sinned. Even if it is my son Jonathan who has sinned, we will execute him." **His men knew who was guilty, but** none of them said anything to Saul.

40 Then Saul told all the Israelite soldiers, "**Since no one is saying who has sinned,** all of you stand over there, and my son Jonathan and I will stand over here **and we will cast a lot to find out**." The soldiers told Saul, "Do whatever you think is best."

41 Then Saul prayed to Yahweh as the God whom the Israelites worshiped, "Please use this lot to show who has sinned." Then the priest threw a lot, and it indicated that either Jonathan or Saul had sinned, not one of the other Israelite soldiers. **42** Then Saul told the priest, "Throw the lot again to indicate which of us has sinned." So he did, and the lot indicated that Jonathan had sinned.

43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me how you sinned."

Jonathan replied, “I ate some honey. It was only a little bit that was on the end of the spear that I was holding. If you feel that you must execute me for doing that, then go ahead.” **44** Saul replied, “Yes, I must certainly execute you, Jonathan! I ask God to kill me and do further bad things to me **if I do not execute you for committing this sin**!”

45 But the Israelite soldiers said to Saul, “Jonathan has led all us Israelites to this great victory! So you must not execute him! That would be very wrong! Since Jonathan led us to this great victory by depending on God’s help, we swear by Yahweh that we will not allow you to harm him in any way.” By saying that, the Israelite soldiers persuaded Saul not to execute Jonathan.

46 Then Saul ordered his soldiers to stop pursuing the Philistine army**, and he returned to his home in the city of Gibeah**. The Philistine soldiers returned to their land.

47 After Saul became the king of Israel, he fought against its enemies on every side. He fought against Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever the Israelite army fought, they badly defeated their enemies. **48** Saul’s army fought bravely and defeated the very tall descendants of Amalek. His army rescued the Israelites from those who had been stealing their crops and animals.

49 **When he became king,** Saul had three sons. Their names were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchi-Shua. Saul also had two daughters. Their names were Merab and Michal. Merab was the older sister, and Michal was the younger sister. **50** The name of Saul’s wife was Ahinoam. She was the daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the commander of Saul’s army was Abner. He was the son of Saul’s uncle Ner. **51** Saul’s father Kish and Abner’s father Ner were both sons of a man whose name was Abiel.

52 For the whole time that Saul was alive, his army had to fight hard against the Philistine army. So whenever Saul saw a skillful soldier or a strong man, he forced him to join his army.

15 **1** One day Samuel said to Saul, “It was Yahweh who sent me to appoint you as king of the Israelite people. So he expects you to obey this message that he has given me for you.
2 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, has declared this: ‘I am going to punish the descendants of Amalek for attacking the Israelite people when the Israelites left Egypt. **3** So

now go with your army and attack the Amalekites. Destroy all of the people and all of their possessions. Do not spare any of the people. Kill them all, even if they are women or young children who cannot fight against you. Do not spare any of the animals, even if you could use them for carrying things or for plowing or for wool and milk.'"

4 So Saul summoned the Israelite army and gathered them near the city of Telaim. There were 10,000 soldiers from the tribe of Judah and 200,000 soldiers from the other Israelite tribes. **5** Then Saul led his army to the main city in which the Amalekites lived. The army hid in a valley so that they could attack them suddenly. **6** But first Saul sent a message to the Kenites, who lived in that area. He told them, "Move away right now from where the Amalekites live. You acted kindly toward our Israelite ancestors when they left Egypt, and so we do not want to kill you when we kill them." When the Kenites heard that, they immediately left the area where the Amalekites lived.

7 Then Saul's army slaughtered the Amalekites. They killed everyone who lived in the area between the city of Havilah in the east to the region of Shur in the west. Shur was at the border between Israel and Egypt. **8** Saul's army killed all of those Amalekites as Yahweh had commanded. However, Saul told the soldiers not to kill Agag, the king of the Amalekites. **9** So Saul and his soldiers spared Agag. They also spared the best animals in the Amalekites' flocks and herds. They looked for special animals and ones that would taste delicious. They kept animals like that and only destroyed animals that they considered to be worthless.

10 Then Yahweh said to Samuel, **11** "Saul has not done what I told him to do, and that shows that he is no longer obedient to me. As a result, I am sorry that I appointed Saul to be your king." But when Samuel heard this, he became very upset. He prayed hard to Yahweh all that night to try to get him to change his mind.

12 Samuel got started early the next morning so that he could go and speak with Saul. Someone told Samuel, "Saul went to the city of Carmel. He did that to set up a monument in his own honor. Then he left there and went to Gilgal."

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

14 But Samuel replied, “If that is true, then I should not be hearing sheep bleating or cattle mooing, but I am!”

15 Saul replied, “The soldiers wanted to save the best sheep and cattle so they could offer them as sacrifices to Yahweh, your God. So they took these animals from the Amalekites and brought them here. But we completely destroyed all the other animals that the Amalekites had.”

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

Saul replied, “Tell me what he said.” **17** Samuel said, “Previously you did not think that you were important. But Yahweh appointed you to be the king of Israel, so now you have become the leader of all the tribes of Israel. **18** And Yahweh sent you to do something for him. He told you, ‘Go and get rid of all those Amalekites who sinned against me. Attack them and kill all of them.’ **19** So you should have done what Yahweh told you to do! You should not have greedily taken for yourself what the Amalekites had **instead of destroying it**! You have done something that Yahweh considers to be evil.”

20 Saul replied to Samuel, “But I did do what Yahweh sent me to do! While it is true that I brought back the Amalekite king Agag, I and my soldiers killed all the other Amalekites!
21 And my men brought back only the best of the sheep and cattle and other things so that we could sacrifice them to Yahweh your God once we got here to Gilgal.”

22 But Samuel replied,

> “It pleases Yahweh more when people do what he tells them to do
> than when they completely burn animals as sacrifices to him and offer him other kinds of sacrifices.
> It is much better to obey Yahweh than to offer sacrifices to him.
> It is better to pay attention to what he says **and do it** than to burn the fat of rams as a sacrifice to him.
> **23** To rebel against God is as sinful as doing sorcery,
> and stubbornly resisting his correction is as sinful as worshiping idols.

You have disobeyed what Yahweh told you to do,
and as a result, he has decided that you will no longer be king."

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I admit that I have sinned. I disobeyed what you told me Yahweh had commanded. I did that because I was afraid of what the soldiers would do to me if I did not give them what they wanted. **25** But please forgive me for sinning. Come back with me **and sacrifice some of these animals yourself** so that I can worship Yahweh."

26 But Samuel replied, "No, I will not go back with you. You have chosen to disobey what Yahweh commanded you to do. So he has decided that you will no longer be the king of Israel." **27** Then Samuel turned to leave, Saul tried to stop him by grabbing the edge of his robe, and when he did that, he tore off a piece of it.

28 Samuel said to him, "**You have taken this piece away from my robe, and in the same way,** Yahweh has now taken the kingship of Israel away from you. He is going to make another Israelite king instead of you. That other Israelite is a better man than you are. **29** You can be sure of this because when the glorious God whom the Israelite people worship says something, he means it and he will not change his mind about it. Humans sometimes change their minds, but God does not do that, because he is not a human."

30 **Then Saul pleaded with Samuel further.** He said, "I admit that I have sinned. But please honor me in front of the Israelite leaders and people by coming with me so that I can worship Yahweh your God." **31** So Samuel finally agreed to do that. They went together back to where the people were, and Saul worshiped Yahweh there.

32 Then Samuel said, "Bring the Amalekite king Agag to me." So they brought Agag to him. They had tied him up as a prisoner. Agag was thinking, "**Now that Samuel is here,** I am sure that the Israelites are not going to execute me painfully."

33 But Samuel said to him,

"You have led armies that have killed the sons of many women with their swords.
So now your mother will no longer have a son as other women do."

Then Samuel chopped Agag into pieces with his sword. He did that at Gilgal, where the Israelites worshiped Yahweh.

34 Then Samuel left there and returned to his home in Ramah, and Saul went to his home in Gibeah. **35** Samuel never saw Saul again for as long as he lived. He remained very sad that Saul had not been a good king. And Yahweh regretted that he had appointed Saul to be the king of Israel.

16 **1** Finally, Yahweh said to Samuel, "You know that I have decided not to allow Saul to continue to be the king of Israel. So you should not keep feeling sad for him. I have recognized that one of the sons of the man whose name is Jesse who lives in the town of Bethlehem will make a good king. So I am sending you there **to pour oil on the head of that son to show this**. Now put some olive oil in a small container and go there."

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

3 Invite Jesse to come to the sacrifice. **When he comes,** I will show you what to do. I will tell you which of his sons I have chosen to be the king, and I want you to pour the olive oil on his head **to indicate that I have chosen him to be the king**."

4 Samuel did what Yahweh told him to do. He went to Bethlehem. When the town leaders saw him coming, they were very afraid. One of them asked him, "Have you come here to speak peacefully with us?"

5 Samuel replied, "Yes. I have come peacefully, to make a sacrifice to Yahweh. **Wash your bodies and your clothes in order to** devote yourselves to Yahweh in a special way, and then come with me to where we will offer this cow as a sacrifice." Then Samuel invited Jesse and his sons to come to the sacrifice as well, and he helped them prepare themselves to participate.

6 When Jesse and his sons arrived at the place where Samuel was going to offer the sacrifice, Samuel looked at **Jesse's oldest son** Eliab, and thought, "This must be the man whom Yahweh wants me to anoint as the next king!"

7 But Yahweh said to Samuel, “Yes, Eliab is handsome and very tall, but this should not
impress you, since he is not the one I have chosen. I do not evaluate people as humans do.
Humans evaluate people by their appearances, but I evaluate people by their character.”

8 Then Jesse told his next oldest son Abinadab to come and walk past Samuel. But when he
did that, Samuel said, “Yahweh has not chosen this one, either.” 9 Then Jesse told his next
oldest son Shammah to come and walk past Samuel. But when he did that, Samuel said,
“Yahweh has not chosen this one, either.” 10 Similarly, Jesse told the other four of his sons
who were present to come and walk past Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “Yahweh has not
chosen any of these sons of yours.” 11 Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all of your sons?”
Jesse replied, “My youngest son is not here. That is because he is out in the pasture taking care
of the sheep.” Samuel told Jesse, “We will only sit down to eat once he has joined us. So send
someone to bring him here.”

12 So Jesse sent someone to get David and bring him there. When David arrived, Samuel
saw that he was a healthy, handsome young man with beautiful eyes. Then Yahweh said, “This
is the one whom I have chosen. So anoint him to be king.”

13 So as David stood there with his older brothers around him, Samuel took the container
of oil that he had brought and poured some of it on David’s head to indicate that Yahweh had
chosen him to be the next king. Immediately the Spirit of Yahweh began to influence David
powerfully, and the Spirit continued to influence him from then on. After they had shared a
meal together with the meat from the heifer, Samuel left and went back home to Ramah.

14 But Yahweh’s Spirit no longer influenced Saul. Instead, Yahweh sent a troubling spirit
that made Saul afraid.

15 His servants said to him, “It is evident that God has now sent a troubling spirit that is
making you afraid. 16 So we suggest that you allow us, your servants here, to search for a man
who plays the harp well. He can play the harp whenever that troubling spirit bothers you. Then
you will calm down.”

17 Saul told his servants, “Fine, find a man for me who can play the harp well, and bring
him to me.”

18 One of Saul's servants said to him, "I can think of someone. A man whose name is Jesse who lives in the city of Bethlehem has a certain son. I have observed that this son plays the harp very well. I have also observed that he is a brave man and a capable soldier. He is handsome, and he speaks well. Yahweh has been helping him **in all these ways**."

19 So Saul sent some messengers to Jesse. He told them to say to Jesse, "Send your son David to me, the one who takes care of your sheep." **20** **When the messengers came and asked Jesse to send his son David to Saul, he agreed.** Jesse got some loaves of bread, a container of wine, and a young goat. He put them on a donkey that would carry them, and he gave them to David to take to Saul as a present.

21 Then David went to Saul and started to work for him. Saul liked David very much, and he became the man who carried Saul's weapons when Saul went to fight in battles. **22** Then Saul sent messengers to say to Jesse, "I am very pleased with David. So please let him stay here and work for me." **And Jesse agreed.**

23 After that, whenever the troubling spirit that God sent made Saul afraid, David would play the harp. Then the bad spirit would stop making Saul afraid, and he would calm down and feel better.

17 **1** The Philistines brought their soldiers to fight against the Israelite army. They assembled near the town of Socoh within the territory of the tribe of Judah. They set up their tents in the area that people called Ephes Dammim, which is between Socoh and the town of Azekah. **2** Saul gathered the Israelite solders, and they set up their tents near the Valley of Elah. Then they formed battle lines in order to be ready to fight the Philistines. **3** The Philistine and Israelite armies formed their battle lines on two hills on opposite sides of the valley.

4 Then a great warrior, three meters tall, came out from the Philistine camp. His name was Goliath, and he came from the city of Gath. **5** He wore a helmet made of bronze to protect his head, and he wore body armor that had small overlapping metal plates to protect his body. The metal armor weighed over 50 kilograms. **6** He wore bronze armor on his legs **to protect them**. He had slung a small bronze spear across his back. **7** He also had a spear that was so thick and

long it was like the beam that weavers use. Its iron head weighed about seven kilograms. A soldier carrying Goliath's huge shield walked in front of him.

8 Goliath stood there and shouted to the Israelite army, "There is no need for our entire armies to fight each other. You can see that I am a Philistine soldier who is ready to fight alone on behalf of my people group. Someone ought to be able to represent all of you servants of Saul. Choose one man who can fight on behalf of all of you and send him down into this valley where I am! **9** If he can fight with me and kill me, then my fellow Philistines will all become your slaves. But if I can fight with him and kill him, then all of you Israelites will become our slaves instead." **10** Then Goliath mocked the Israelites. He said, "I now claim publicly, to your shame, that none of you Israelite soldiers is brave enough to fight me! **If that is not true,** send a man down here who will fight with me!" **11** When Saul and all the Israelite soldiers heard Goliath say this, they lost their courage and became terrified.

12 Now there was a young man whose name was David. His father was a man whose name was Jesse who belonged to the clan of Ephrath. He lived in the town of Bethlehem within the territory of the tribe of Judah. Jesse had eight sons. When Saul was king, Jesse had already lived for many years, so he was older than most other men. **13** Jesse's three oldest sons had gone to fight the Philistines with Saul as their commander. The name of Jesse's oldest son was Eliab. His two younger brothers were Abinadab and Shammah. **14** David was Jesse's youngest son. While his three oldest brothers remained in Saul's camp, **15** David went back and forth from the camp to his home in Bethlehem so that he could take care of his father's sheep.

16 Twice each day, in the morning and in the evening, Goliath came out from the Philistine camp and stood in the valley between the two armies. He challenged the Israelites to choose one man to fight with him. He did that for 40 days.

17 One day, Jesse said to his son David, "Here is a large sack of roasted grain and ten loaves of bread. Take them quickly to your older brothers at the army camp. **18** Also, take these ten large chunks of cheese as a gift to the commander of their group of one thousand soldiers. And see if your older brothers are doing well. If they are safe, bring back something to show they are all right.

19 You will be able to find your brothers near the Valley of Elah. They are camping there with Saul and the other Israelite soldiers, ready to fight the Philistines." **20** So David arranged for another shepherd to take care of the sheep. Early the next morning he took the food that Jesse had told him to bring and went to the Israelite camp. He arrived at the edge of the camp just as the Israelite soldiers were going out into their battle lines. As they went, they were shouting a war cry. **21** The Philistine army and the Israelite army stood in their battle lines **on the hillsides above the valley**, facing each other, ready for battle. **22** David gave the containers of food he had brought to the man who was in charge of the supplies for the army. Then he ran to the battle lines and greeted his older brothers. He asked them if they were doing well.
23 While David was speaking with them, something happened that immediately got his attention. Someone came into the valley between the battle lines. This was the man whom people called Goliath the Philistine Champion. He was from the city of Gath. He came forward from the Philistine battle lines and once again challenged any Israelite soldier to fight him in single combat. David heard what Goliath said. **24** When all the Israelite soldiers saw Goliath, they were terrified and backed away from him. **25** The soldiers were saying to each other, "See how this man defiantly approaches us! And hear how he mocks us Israelite soldiers! The king has said that he will give a huge reward to whoever kills this man. He also says that he will allow that man to marry his daughter, and that he will no longer require that man's family to pay taxes or do unpaid work for the Israelite kingdom."

26 David talked with some of the men who were standing near him. He said, "This Philistine is a mere pagan. He should not be mocking soldiers who worship the only true God. Please confirm for me what the king will give to the soldier who kills this Philistine and stops him from shaming us Israelites."

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

28 But when David's oldest brother Eliab heard David talking to the men, he became very angry with him. He said to David, "You should not have come here! You are supposed to be watching our father's small flock of sheep, but I imagine you left them alone in a desolate pastureland. I know you think you have a right to be here, but you do not. You do not have good motives. You came because you want to watch the battle!"

29 David replied, “I have done nothing wrong! I was merely asking a question!” **30** Then David walked over to another man and asked him the same question, and the man gave him the same answer. Each time he asked different soldiers, they all gave him the same answer.
31 Eventually some of King Saul’s officers heard about what David was asking, and they told Saul. Then Saul sent someone to bring David to him.

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

33 Saul said to David, “You are only a young man, while he has been a very powerful soldier ever since he was a young man. He is the Philistine champion. So you are not able to go and fight with him!”

34 David replied, “I have been taking care of my father’s sheep for many years. During that time, whenever a lion or a bear came and carried a lamb away from the others, **35** I went after it and hit it and rescued the lamb from the animal’s mouth. If it turned to attack me, I grabbed the animal by its jaw and hit it and killed it. **36** So I have killed both lions and bears. And since he has mocked soldiers who worship the only true God, I will kill this pagan Philistine too!” **37** David continued, “Yahweh has enabled me to kill both lions and bears, and he will also enable me to kill this Philistine!” Then Saul said to David, “All right, go and fight him, and I hope that Yahweh will help you!”

38 Then Saul let David wear the special clothes that he wore under his armor in battles, and he also gave him a bronze helmet to wear and some body armor that had small overlapping metal plates. **39** David put these things on. Saul also gave David his sword, and David strapped that on over them. Since David had not worn armor before, he walked around to find out what it was like to walk wearing armor. Then David told Saul, “I am not used to wearing these things, so I cannot fight while wearing them!” So he took them off.

40 Then he picked up his shepherd’s staff, and he went to a stream bed and chose five smooth stones. He put those stones in the leather bag he always wore around his shoulder as a shepherd. Then he took his sling in his hand, and he started walking toward Goliath.

41 Goliath walked steadily toward David, with the soldier who was carrying his shield walking in front of him. **42** **When he got near David,** Goliath looked at David closely. He

believed he could easily defeat David because he was only a young man. David still had a handsome, boyish appearance. **43** Goliath said to David, “You might be able to chase away a dog with a stick like the one you are carrying, but I am not a dog!” Then he called out to his gods and asked them to harm David. **44** He said to David, “Come here, and I will kill you and give your dead body to the birds and wild animals to eat!”

45 David replied, “You are coming to attack me with a sword and a spear and a curved sword. But I am coming to you with the authority of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies. You have mocked the Israelite soldiers who worship him, and that is like mocking Yahweh himself. **46** Today Yahweh will enable me to defeat you. I will kill you and cut off your head. And today we Israelites will kill many Philistine soldiers and give their bodies to the birds and wild animals to eat. People throughout the world will hear about it, and they will know that we Israelite people worship an all-powerful God. **47** And all of the soldiers who have gathered here will recognize that Yahweh does not need to use weapons such as swords or spears in order to rescue people. It is actually Yahweh who will be fighting this battle against you, and he will enable us to defeat all of you Philistines.”

48 Then Goliath started to come closer in order to attack David. David ran quickly toward him, in the direction of the Philistine battle line. **49** David reached into his shoulder bag and took out a stone. He put in his sling and hurled it at Goliath. The stone hit Goliath in the forehead and broke into the bone at the front his skull. Goliath collapsed facedown onto the ground.

50-51 Then David ran and stood over Goliath. He pulled Goliath’s sword from its sheath and killed him with it, and then he cut off his head. In that way David defeated that great Philistine soldier. He was able to attack him and kill him even though he did not have a sword. He used only a sling and a stone!

When the other Philistines saw that their great soldier was dead, they ran away. **52** The Israelite soldiers rushed out of their battle line and ran after them, shouting. They chased them all the way back down the Valley of Elah and all the way to the city of Ekron. The Philistines fled for safety inside the city walls and shut the gates behind them. The Israelites killed Philistine soldiers as they went, so that dead Philistines were lying on the road all the way from the city of Shaaraim to the cities of Gath and Ekron. **53** When the Israelites came back after

chasing the Philistines, they took everything valuable from the Philistine camp. **54** David later took Goliath's head to Jerusalem, but he kept Goliath's weapons and armor at home in his own tent.

55 As Saul watched David going toward Goliath, he said to Abner, the commander of his army, "Abner, who is the father of that young man?" Abner replied, "I swear by your life, O king, that I do not know."

56 Then Saul told him, "I want you personally to find out who his father is."

57 So later, when David returned from killing Goliath, Abner brought him to Saul. David was carrying Goliath's head.

58 Saul asked him, "Young man, who is your father?" David replied, "Sir, my father is the man whose name is Jesse who lives in the town of Bethlehem. He is your loyal subject."

18 **1** After David finished speaking with Saul, **he met Saul's son Jonathan.** Jonathan immediately felt a strong friendship for David. He loved him as much as he loved himself.
2 Saul did not allow David to return home after he killed Goliath. Instead, Saul kept David with him to serve him. **3** Because he loved David as much as he loved himself, Jonathan made a solemn agreement with David that they would always be friends. **4** Jonathan took off the outer robe he was wearing and gave it to David. He also gave David the special clothes he wore under his armor, his sword, his bow and arrows, and his belt.

5 David then fought battles as Saul directed him. Whatever Saul told him to do, David did it very successfully. As a result, Saul appointed David as a commander in the army. The people of Israel, and especially the ones who served Saul directly, admired David greatly.

6 One time, David and the troops he was commanding defeated a Philistine army and killed many of its soldiers. Then he returned to Israel with the rest of the Israelite army. Women came out from many Israelite cities and towns to greet King Saul **and all the soldiers**. They were singing and dancing very happily, and they were playing tambourines and lyres.
7 To celebrate, the women sang this song:

"Saul has killed thousands of enemy soldiers,

And David has killed tens of thousands of them!”

8 When Saul heard the women singing that, he did not like it at all. He became very angry. He said to himself, “They are saying that David has killed tens of thousands of enemy soldiers. But they are only saying that I have killed thousands of them. The only greater honor they could give him would be to make him the king instead of me!” **9** From that time on, Saul watched David very closely **because he was suspicious that David would try to become king**.

10 The next day, a troubling spirit that God sent suddenly began to affect Saul. He began to act like a crazy person inside his house. David was playing the lyre for him, as he often did. Saul was holding his royal spear. **11** Saul thought, “I can throw my spear so hard at David that it will go through him into the wall behind him and pin him there!” Saul threw his spear at David twice, but David jumped aside both times.

12 Saul realized that Yahweh was no longer helping him. He realized that Yahweh was now helping David. This made Saul afraid of David. **13** So Saul tried to make sure that David would not be near him. He made David the commander of a thousand of his soldiers. Then David had to lead those soldiers out on military campaigns. **14** But Yahweh helped David, so David won all of the battles that he fought. **15** When Saul heard how successful David and his soldiers were, he became very afraid even to be in the same place as David. **16** But because David was leading their soldiers very successfully in battles, all the people of Israel and of Judah loved David.

17 One day Saul said to David, “I want to talk to you about my older daughter Merab. I will allow you to marry her if you serve me bravely by fighting battles for Yahweh **against the Philistines**.” Saul said that because he thought, “I will not try to kill David myself. I will have the Philistines kill him.”

18 But David said to Saul, “I do not have the standing to become your son-in-law. I am not a very important person, and I come from a family that does not belong to an important Israelite clan.” **19** So at the time when Saul would have allowed David to marry his daughter Merab, instead he allowed a different man to marry her. This man was from the town of Meholah and his name was Adriel.

20 However, Saul's other daughter, Michal, fell in love with David. When someone told Saul about that, he was pleased. **21** Saul thought, "I will promise to give Michal to him as his wife, but I will do that in order to trap him. **I will make him fight dangerously against the Philistines in order to marry her,** and this will enable the Philistines to kill him." So Saul told David once again that he could become his son-in-law right away.

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

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

24 Saul's servants came back and told him what David had said. **25** Saul replied, "Go and tell David, 'The king does not want you to pay him a large amount of money in order to marry Michal. All he wants you to do is kill a hundred Philistine soldiers and bring back their foreskins. In that way, he will get revenge on his enemies.'" But what Saul really wanted was for the Philistines to kill David while he was trying to kill them.

26 When the servants told that to David, he was very pleased that he could become the king's son-in-law by doing that. Saul gave David a time limit. Within that time, **27** David and his men went into battle and killed two hundred Philistine soldiers. He brought back their foreskins. Saul's officials counted them all while Saul was watching. This proved that David had done what Saul had required for him to become his son-in-law. So Saul allowed David to marry his daughter Michal.

28 But when Saul realized that Yahweh was helping David and that his own daughter Michal truly loved David, **29** he became even more afraid of David. After this, for as long as he lived, Saul was David's enemy.

30 The Philistine commanders kept leading their armies to fight against the Israelites, but every time they fought, David and his soldiers were more successful than any of Saul's other army commanders. As a result, David earned an excellent reputation.

19 **1** Then Saul urged all his officers and his son Jonathan to kill David. But Jonathan liked David very much. **2** So he warned David, “My father Saul is looking for a way to kill you. So please be very careful. Tomorrow morning, find a place to hide **in the field** and do not come out **unless I tell you it is safe**. **3** I will ask my father to go out with me into the field where you are hiding. While we are there, I will talk to him about you. I will find out what he intends to do to you. Then I will tell you everything I learn.” **So David did what Jonathan told him to do.**

4 The next morning, Jonathan spoke with his father Saul **in the field**. He said many good things about David. He told his father, “Please do not do anything to harm David, who serves you faithfully. That would be a sin. David has never done anything to harm you. Everything he has done has helped you very much. **5** He risked his life when he fought against Goliath, the great soldier of the Philistine army. By enabling David to kill him, Yahweh won a great victory for all the people of Israel. You were very happy when you saw that. There is no reason for you to kill David. You should not do that. It would be sinning by killing an innocent man.”

6 What Jonathan said persuaded Saul. Saul swore by Yahweh that he would not kill David.

7 **Then Saul left, and** Jonathan called to David **to come out of his hiding place**. Jonathan told him that Saul had sworn he would not kill him. Then Jonathan brought David back to Saul, and David served Saul personally as he had done before.

8 But then the Philistines attacked the Israelites again. David led his soldiers to fight against the Philistine army. David’s soldiers killed many of the Philistine soldiers, and as a result, the rest of the Philistine army ran away.

9 **This made Saul very jealous again. As a result,** one day when Saul was sitting in his house, the troubling spirit that Yahweh had sent began to distress him again. Saul was holding his royal spear, and David was playing the harp for him. **10** Saul hurled his spear hard enough at David that it would have gone through him into the wall behind him and pinned him there. But David jumped aside so that the spear did not hit him. It stuck in the wall instead. David escaped by running out into the darkness.

11 Then Saul sent some soldiers to David’s house. He told them to see whether David was in the house and to kill him when he left the house the following morning. But David’s wife

Michal knew about this and warned him. She told him, “In order to save your life, you must run away tonight. If you do not do that, some soldiers will kill you tomorrow!” **12** Then she lowered David out a window since the soldiers were watching the door, and he escaped by running away from the house. **13** Then Michal took a large statue that was in the house and put it in the bed. She covered it with David’s cloak as if he were sleeping under his cloak as a blanket, and she put some goat’s hair around the head of the statue to make it look like a human head.

14 The soldiers did not see David leaving the house in the morning, so they reported that to Saul. Saul then sent soldiers to enter the house and bring David back to him. But when they came to the door, Michal told them that David was so sick that he could not get out of bed.

15 When the soldiers reported that, Saul told them to enter David’s house and see whether he was really sick. He told them, “If you have to, pick up the whole bed he is lying on and use that to carry him back here to me. That way I can kill him!” **16** But when those soldiers entered David’s house, they found that there was only a statue in his bed, with goat’s hair around its head.

17 When they reported that to Saul, he summoned Michal to come to him. Saul said to her, “Why did you trick me like that? You allowed my enemy to escape!”

Michal replied to Saul, “David told me that if I did not let him escape, he would kill me! So I had to let him escape.”

18 After David had escaped from Saul, he went to Samuel, who was at his home in Ramah. He told Samuel everything that Saul had done to try to kill him. Then David and Samuel went to Naioth, which was nearby, and they stayed there. **19** Someone told Saul that David was in Naioth near the city of Ramah. **20** So Saul sent some soldiers to capture David. When those soldiers arrived in Ramah, they met some prophets who were speaking and singing as God inspired them. Samuel was there as their leader. The Spirit of God influenced the soldiers whom Saul had sent, and they began to speak and sing themselves instead of trying to capture David. **21** When Saul heard about that, he sent another group of soldiers to capture David. But when those soldiers met those prophets, the Spirit of God influenced them too, and they also sang and spoke instead of trying to capture David. When Saul heard about that, he sent one more group of soldiers to capture David. But the same thing happened to them. **22** Finally Saul

himself went to Ramah. He went to the big well at the place that people call Secu, and he asked the people who had gathered there to draw water, "Where are Samuel and David?"

The people replied, "You will find them at Naioth, near Ramah." 23 So Saul started walking toward Ramah to go to Naioth. While he was still on his way there, the Spirit of God influenced him as well, and he spoke and sang all the way to Naioth near Ramah. 24 There he also took off his outer clothes, and he spoke and sang in front of Samuel. He lay on the ground uncovered all day and all night. That is the reason why, when people see someone doing something unexpected, they say, "Is Saul also a prophet?"

20 1 David ran away from Naioth. He went to meet with Jonathan and told him, "I have done nothing wrong. I have not harmed your father. Nevertheless, he is trying to kill me!"

2 Jonathan replied, "My father is not going to kill you! I would not let that happen. Besides, he always tells me before he does anything of any kind. So he would not fail to tell me if he were planning to kill you. What you are saying cannot be true."

3 Then David solemnly declared this to Jonathan: "Your father knows very well that you and I are very good friends, so he says to himself, 'I will not tell Jonathan what I am going to do. If I tell Jonathan, he will be upset, and then he will tell David.' But I swear by Yahweh and I swear by your own life that your father is just about to kill me."

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

5 David replied, "Here is what you can do for me. Tomorrow the king will host a feast to celebrate the start of a new month. I always sit with the king at such festivals. But this time, allow me not to attend. Instead, I will hide in the field, and I will stay there until the evening of the day after tomorrow. 6 If your father asks why I am not there at the festival, this is what you should tell him: 'All of David's relatives gather once a year to sacrifice an animal and eat a meal from the meat at which they praise and thank Yahweh. He asked permission from me to make a brief visit to Bethlehem so that he could eat that meal with his family.' 7 If your father says, 'Very well', then I know I will be safe. But if he becomes extremely angry, you can be sure that he definitely intends to kill me. 8 If that is true, then you must protect me. You indicated you would do that when you promised, with Yahweh as your witness, that you and I

would always be good friends. But if I deserve to die for something very wrong that I have done, then you should kill me yourself. You do not need to make your father kill me."

9 Jonathan replied, "I would never let my father kill you! If I ever find out that my father definitely intends to kill you, I will certainly tell you that."

10 David asked him, "How will I find out if your father answers you harshly?"

11 Jonathan replied, "**We need to go somewhere where we can speak more privately.** Please come with me out to the field." So they went together out into the field.

12 There Jonathan said to David, "I swear by Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, that by this time tomorrow or the next day, I will find out from my father whether he intends to kill you. If he does not intend to kill you, I will certainly send a message to you to inform you of that. **13** But if he is planning to kill you, I hope that Yahweh will punish me very severely if I do not tell you in advance and help you flee so that you get away safely. Yahweh helped my father when he became king, and I hope that Yahweh will help you in the same way. **14** While Yahweh was listening, we swore an oath that we would always be friends. So I know you will not kill me when you become king. But suppose I have already died when you become king. Then our oath would not apply to me personally. **15** Instead, please never stop acting kindly toward my family, even after Yahweh has killed all your enemies everywhere on earth."

16 Then Jonathan and David made a solemn agreement that applied to David's descendants as well. They agreed that if David or his descendants ever killed Jonathan's descendants, then they wanted Yahweh to punish David and his descendants by killing them. **17** Then Jonathan also had David swear by the love he had for Jonathan **that he would not harm his descendants. Jonathan knew that David would keep that promise** because David loved Jonathan as much as he loved himself.

18 Then Jonathan told him, "Tomorrow we will celebrate the festival of the new moon. Since you will not be sitting at your place when we eat, my father will miss you. **19** The day after tomorrow, hurry down from your hiding place high up in the mountains. Come back here and hide in the same place where you hid when I first warned you that my father was trying to kill you. Wait by the big rock that people call Ezel. **20** I will come out and pretend that I am

using the rock as a target to practice how to shoot arrows. I will shoot three arrows, and I will make sure that they land beside the rock. **21** Then I will tell a boy to go and get the arrows. You may hear me call out to him, 'You have gone too far, the arrows are behind you, turn around and pick them up!' I swear by Yahweh that if you hear me say that, then it is safe for you to return. You are in no danger. **22** But you might also hear me call out to the boy, 'The arrows are still past you, keep going!' If you hear me say that, you will know that you must leave immediately. Yahweh wants you to go away **so that you will be safe**. **23** Regarding the promise we made never to harm the descendants of the other, Yahweh will always make sure that we keep it."

24 So David went and hid in the field. When the festival of the new moon started, King Saul came to the table for the feast. **25** He sat where he usually sat, in the place of honor **at the end of the table** close to the wall. Jonathan gave up his seat next to Saul so that Abner, the army commander, could sit next to him. But David was absent. He was not sitting in his usual seat. **26** At the time Saul did not say anything **about David being absent**, because he was thinking, "Something must have happened that caused David to become ritually unclean so that he cannot attend this religious festival today." **27** But the next day, when David was not sitting at the place where he usually sat, Saul asked Jonathan, "Why has that son of Jesse not been here to eat with us either yesterday or today?"

28 Jonathan replied, "David urgently requested permission from me to go to Bethlehem. **29** He told me, 'Our family is going to offer a sacrifice in Bethlehem, and my oldest brother has insisted that I be there. So please let me go. I hope that you think well enough of me to permit that, since I would like to go and visit with my older brothers.' **I allowed David to go, and** that is the reason why he is not here eating with you."

30 Saul became furious with Jonathan. He said to him, "Your mother must have been unfaithful to me**, because no real son of mine would have done that**! It is no secret to me that you have promised always to be friends with that son of Jesse. But by being his friend, you are shaming yourself by showing that your mother must have had sexual relations with some other man who is your actual father. **31** I can assure you that as long as Jesse's son is living, you will never become king. No, you will never rule this kingdom! So now send someone to get David and bring him to me, because I must execute him!"

32 Jonathan insisted to his father, “David has done nothing wrong! So you should not execute him!” **33** Then Saul **became so angry that he** threw his spear at Jonathan to try to kill him. **But the spear did not hit him.** So Jonathan knew that his father really did want to kill David.

34 This made Jonathan very angry, and he left the room. On that second day of the festival, he refused to eat anything. His father had said unfairly that David was not loyal to him, and that made Jonathan offended for David’s sake.

35 The next morning Jonathan went out to the field **to give a message to David** as he had agreed that he would do. He took a young boy with him. **36** Jonathan told the boy, “Run out into the field so that you can find the arrows that I shoot.” The boy started running, and Jonathan shot an arrow over the boy **so that it would land on the ground far ahead of him**. **37** The boy ran to the place where the arrow hit the ground, but Jonathan shouted out to him, “The arrow is farther away!” **38** **After he had done this three times,** he shouted to the boy, “Now come back here right away! Do not stay out there in the field!” The boy picked up the arrows Jonathan had shot and brought them back to him. **39** The boy did not realize that Jonathan had given a signal to David. Only Jonathan and David knew about that. **40** Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and told him, “Take these back to where I keep my weapons in the city.”

41 When the boy left, David came out from behind the south side of the large rock where he had been hiding. He went to Jonathan and bowed respectfully in front of him three times, with his face touching the ground. Then David and Jonathan kissed each other **on the cheek**, and they cried together until David became exhausted from crying.

42 Jonathan said to David, “I am letting you go safely, because we made a promise to each other with Yahweh as our witness. We asked Yahweh to make sure that we would always help each other and that our descendants would never hurt each other.” Then David finally left, and Jonathan went back into the city of Gibeah.

21 **1** David fled from there and went to the city of Nob. Ahimelech, the high priest, was there with the sacred chest. Ahimelech shook with fear when he saw David coming. He asked David, “Why have you not brought any soldiers with you?”

2 David **did not tell him the truth. He** told Ahimelech, “I have come on a special mission
from the king. I am alone because he told me that no one should find out about what he sent
me to do. But I will have soldiers with me. I have told them to meet me at a specific place, but
I must not say where that is. **3** Please tell me, do you have any food here that you could give
me? Could you give me five loaves of bread, or whatever other food might be here?”

4 Ahimelech told David, “There is no ordinary bread here, but I have some of the sacred
bread that we put on the table in the sacred tent. I will give your men that bread to eat if they
have not recently become ceremonially unclean by having sexual relations with women.”

5 David replied, “As I have always done in the past when I have led my soldiers on a
mission, I have not allowed them to become ceremonially unclean by having sexual relations
before they left. They have remained ceremonially clean even on ordinary missions. So you
can be sure that they have remained ceremonially clean for this special mission.” **6** Now the
only bread that the priest had available was some bread that the priests had put on the table in
Yahweh’s presence in the sacred tent. They had later removed that bread to replace it with fresh
bread. So the priest gave David several loaves of it.

7 On that day a man who worked for Saul was at the sacred tent. His name was Doeg. He
was an Edomite. King Saul had made him the supervisor of all of his shepherds. Doeg needed
to stay at the sacred tent until he had fulfilled a religious duty. **He saw what Ahimelech did to
help David.**

8 David asked Ahimelech, “Do you have a spear or a sword here that you could give me?
The king commanded me to leave right away on this mission, so I did not even have time to
get any weapons.”

9 Ahimelech replied, “The only sword I have here is the sword that belonged to Goliath,
that great Philistine soldier. You killed him in the Valley of Elah. You will find that sword
behind the sacred apron in the sacred tent. It has a cloth around it. If you want it, you may take
it.”

David replied, “There is certainly no other sword that is as good as that one! Please give it
to me.” **10** **So Ahimelech gave it to him, and** David left that same day so that Saul would not
capture him. He ran away to the Philistine city of Gath. He offered to work for Achish, the king

of that city. 11 But the officers of King Achish did not approve of David's coming. They said to King Achish, "This man David is the king of Israel! The women in Israel sing about him as they dance,

'Saul has killed thousands of enemy soldiers,
And David has killed tens of thousands of them!'"

12 David was very concerned about what those officers were saying. It made him very afraid of what King Achish might do to him. 13 So whenever he was with those officers or the king, he acted differently. For as long as he was in Gath, where they could harm him, he pretended that he was insane. When he was waiting in the court outside the palace, he would scratch all over the gate that led into the palace. He also drooled so much that saliva ran down onto his beard.

14 Then King Achish said to his men, "Look at this man! He is acting crazy! You should not have brought him to me! 15 I already have enough crazy people around me! You do not need to bring me any more! I do not want this man to serve me in my palace."

22 1 So David fled from Gath and went to hide in a cave on a hill near the town of Adullam. When his older brothers and his other relatives heard about this, they came and stayed with him there. 2 Then other men joined him. Some were in trouble. Others had debts they could not pay. Still others came because they did not like what was happening in Israel with Saul as king. David became their commander. Eventually he had an army of 400 men.

3 Later David and his men left there and went to the city of Mizpah in the land of Moab. There David asked the king of Moab, "Please allow my father and mother to live here with you until I know what God is going to do for me." 4 The king agreed, so David brought his parents to Moab, where the king would protect them. David and his men found a safe place to hide in Moab. His parents stayed with the king for as long as he was there.

5 A prophet whose name was Gad was with him. One day he told David, "Leave your hideout here and return to Judah." So David and his men went to the forest of Hereth in Judah.

6 Saul learned that people knew that David and his men had returned to Judah. One day
Saul was sitting underneath the tamarisk tree on a hill in the city of Gibeah. He was holding his
royal spear, and his officials were standing around him. **7** He shouted to them as they stood
around him, "You men of the tribe of Benjamin, listen to me! Do not think that the son of Jesse
will give all of you fields and vineyards if he becomes your king! Do not think that he will
appoint all of you as generals and captains in his army! **8** **You seem to think that, and** that is
why you have all conspired against me. Not one of you informed me that my own son had
promised always to be friends with that son of Jesse! Not one of you felt sorry for me or told
me that my son had encouraged my own servant to revolt against me! At this very moment he
is hiding somewhere, hoping to surprise me and kill me!"

9 Doeg, a man from the Edomite people group, was standing there with Saul's officers. He
told Saul, "When I was at Nob, I saw that son of Jesse talking to Ahimelech the priest.
10 Ahimelech asked Yahweh to show David what he should do. Ahimelech also gave David
some food, and he gave him the sword that had belonged to Goliath, that great Philistine
soldier."

11 Then Saul sent messengers to summon the high priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub. The
messengers also summoned all of Ahimelech's relatives who were priests at Nob. So they all
came and stood in front of the king. **12** Saul said to Ahimelech, "You son of Ahitub, listen to
me!"

Ahimelech answered, "Yes, sir?" **13** Saul said, "You are conspiring against me with that
son of Jesse! You gave him some bread and a sword, and you asked God to tell him what he
should do. You helped him to revolt against me, and at this very moment he is hiding
somewhere, hoping to surprise me and kill me!"

14 Ahimelech replied, "**I do not understand why you are saying that, because** no one else
who serves you is more loyal to you than David! He is your son-in-law and the captain of your
bodyguards. The people in your household respect him very much. **15** I have asked God on
previous occasions to tell David what he wanted him to do. I would never help anyone revolt
against you! So please do not accuse me or any of my relatives of being disloyal to you. I do
not know anything about what you are talking about."

16 Saul shouted back, “Ahimelech, I am going to execute you and all your relatives right now!”

17 Then Saul commanded his bodyguards, who were standing around him, “These priests of Yahweh are conspiring with David against me! They knew that David was trying to run away from me, but they did not tell me! So I want you to kill them right away!”

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

18 Then Saul said to Doeg, “You kill them!” So Doeg, that man who was an Edomite, did what Saul commanded and attacked the priests. He killed 85 men that day. Those men were wearing sacred aprons because they were priests. 19 Then Doeg went to kill all the other people of Nob, the city where the priests lived. He killed all the men, women, children, babies, cattle, donkeys, and sheep who were there.

20 However, one of Ahimelech’s sons escaped. His name was Abiathar. He ran away and joined David and the men who were with him. 21 He told David that Saul had commanded Doeg to kill Yahweh’s priests. 22 Then David said to him, “That man from the Edomites, Doeg, was there at Nob on the day when I was there. I knew that he would surely tell Saul that your father helped me. So it is my fault that your father and all of his family are dead. 23 The man who wants to kill you also wants to kill me, so stay with me and do not be afraid. You will be safe if you stay with me.”

23 1 One day messengers came and told David, “We have important news! The Philistine army is attacking the town of Keilah! They are stealing the grain from where the people are threshing it!” 2 So David asked Yahweh, “Should I lead my men to fight against these Philistine soldiers?”

Yahweh told David, “Yes, go and attack them and rescue the people of Keilah.” 3 But David’s men said to him, “Listen, we are afraid here in Judah that Saul might attack us. We will be even more afraid if we go to Keilah where we know the Philistine army is!”

4 So David asked Yahweh again if they should go to Keilah. Yahweh answered, “I will enable you to defeat the Philistines. So yes, go to Keilah and rescue the people there.” 5 So

David and his men went to Keilah and fought against the Philistines. They killed many of their soldiers and captured many of their cattle. In that way David and his men rescued the people of Keilah.

6 David was at Keilah when Abiathar son of Ahimelech ran away to join him. Abiathar brought a sacred apron with him **that he could use to ask what God someone should do**.

7 Someone told Saul that David was at Keilah. Saul said, "God is enabling me to capture him! David has trapped himself in that city, because a wall surrounds it, and I can get its people to lock the gates to keep David from leaving."

8 So Saul gathered his whole army so that they could go to Keilah and surround it. Saul wanted to force the people of the city to surrender David and his men to him.

9 But David found out that Saul was preparing to capture him with his army. So he told Abiathar the priest, "Bring the sacred apron here **so we can use it to consult Yahweh**." **10** **So when Abiathar brought it,** David prayed, "Yahweh, God of us Israelites, I have heard reliably that Saul is planning to come here to Keilah with his army. He will destroy the city if he has to in order to capture me. **11** Will Saul actually come here to Keilah, as people have reported to me? Will the leaders of Keilah let Saul capture me? Yahweh, God of us Israelites, please tell me!"

By means of the stones in the sacred apron, Yahweh replied, "Yes, Saul will come here."
12 Then David asked, "**If we stay here,** will the leaders of Keilah let Saul's army capture me and my men?"

Yahweh replied, "Yes, they will." **13** So David and his men left Keilah. By this time, he had 600 men with him. They continued to move around from one place to another, wherever they thought that Saul would not find them. And when Saul found out that David had gotten away from Keilah, he did not go there.

14 After this, David and his men stayed in hiding places in the desert and in the hills of the desolate area that people call Ziph. Saul kept trying to find out where David was, but God enabled David to hide where Saul could not find him.

15 At one point, David and his men were hiding in the forest of Horesh in the desolate area of Ziph. David knew that Saul was trying to find out where he was so that he could kill him. **16** But Saul's son Jonathan went to David in the forest. He helped him feel brave again by reassuring him that he could trust God to protect him. **17** Jonathan told him, "My father is not going to be able to harm you, so do not be afraid. Some day you will be the king of Israel, and I will be your most important official. Even my father Saul knows that." **18** Then, with Yahweh as their witness, David and Jonathan repeated their solemn promise always to be loyal to each other. Then Jonathan went home, and David stayed in the forest.

19 Then people who lived in the region of Ziph went to Gibeah to speak with Saul. They told him, "David and his men are hiding in our region! They are hiding in places in the forest on the hill of Hakilah, south of the desolate area that people call Jeshimon. **20** So you may go there any time you wish, O king, and it will be our duty to enable you to capture him."

21 Saul replied, "Because you have wanted to help me, I hope that Yahweh will make good things happen for you. **22** But people tell me that David is very clever**, so it will be difficult to capture him**. So I want you to go back and be sure that he is where you say. Have people look and find out exactly where he is staying. **Do not just rely on what someone else says.** Make sure that one of you has actually seen him there. **23** Find out about all the places where he and his men hide. Then return and tell me what you have discovered. I will bring my army and go back with you. If David is anywhere in your area, we will find him, even if we have to look in every part of the territory of Judah!"

24 So those people went back to Ziph to get things ready for Saul to come there. At that time, David and his men were in a desolate area of the plain in the southern part of Jeshimon. People call that area Maon. **25** Saul and his soldiers went to search for David, but someone told David that they were coming. So he and his men went farther south to stay on a rocky hill in the area of Maon. Saul found out about that, and he and his men chased David and his men farther into that desolate area.

26 David and his men were on one side of the hill, and Saul and his soldiers were on the other side. David and his men were hurrying to get away, because Saul and his soldiers were rushing around the other side of the hill to try to surround them and capture them. **27** But then a messenger came to Saul and said to him, "Come quickly! The Philistine army is attacking the

people in our land!” **28** So Saul stopped pursuing David. Instead, he and his soldiers went to fight against the Philistine army. That is the reason why people call that place Sela Hammahlekoth. **29** David and his men also left that place, and they went to the area of Engedi, where there were many places where they could hide safely.

24 **1** After Saul and his soldiers returned home from fighting against the Philistine army, someone reported to Saul that David and his men had gone into the desolate area near En Gedi. **2** When Saul heard that, he chose 3,000 of the best soldiers he could find anywhere in Israel. They went to search for David and his men among the caves in the rocky cliffs in that area. Those cliffs were so steep that only wild goats lived on them.

3 As they searched, they came to a place where shepherds had built enclosures for their sheep in front of the entrances to caves. Saul went into one of the caves to use it as a toilet. He did not realize that David and his men were hiding farther inside that same cave. **4** David’s men saw Saul and whispered to him, “Yahweh told you that he would put your enemy in a position where you could do anything you wanted to him. Look! He has done that right now!” So David crept quietly toward the entrance of the cave, and he cut off a piece of Saul’s robe. **5** David then he returned to his men.

But he felt guilty for having cut off a piece of Saul’s robe. **6** David told his men, “Yahweh is very displeased with me for doing that to my master, the man Yahweh appointed as king! Because Yahweh chose him to be the king, I should not have done anything hostile to him.” **7** By saying that, David made his men move farther back into the cave away from Saul.

He did not allow them to kill him. After Saul left the cave and started to search for David again, **8** David then came out of the cave and shouted to Saul, “King Saul, my lord!” Saul turned around and looked, and David humbly bowed down with his face touching the ground. **9** Then he said to Saul, “You should not pay any attention to people who tell you that I actually want to hurt you! **10** Today you can clearly recognize that what they say is not true. Today Yahweh brought you into this cave, where I could have killed you. Some of my men told me that I should do that. But I spared your life. I told them that I would not harm you, my master, because you are the king whom Yahweh appointed. **11** Your majesty, look carefully at this piece of your robe that I am holding! I cut it from your robe, and that shows that I could have

killed you, but I did not. From this you should understand that I am not wickedly planning to harm you. I have not done anything wrong to you, but you have been searching for me so that you can kill me. **12** I ask Yahweh to decide which of us has been doing what is right. I ask him to punish you if he determines that you have been doing wrong things to me. But I myself will do nothing to harm you. **13** There is an old saying that says, 'Wicked people do wicked things.' But I will do nothing to harm you.

14 You, the king of Israel, did not have to bring this army out here to try to capture me. I am of as low status and as harmless as a dead dog! I am as unimportant as a single flea! **15** I ask Yahweh to be our judge and decide which of us has been doing what is right. I ask him to recognize that he should take my side in our dispute. I ask him to decide that you should not be able to kill me."

16 When David finished saying this to Saul, Saul called back to him and said, "Is that really you speaking to me, David my son?" Then he cried loudly. **17** He told David, "You are a better person than I am. I tried to do something very bad to you, but you did something very good to me. **18** As you have just explained, Yahweh brought me into that cave where you could have easily killed me. But you did not do that. So you have done something very good to me. **19** No one lets his enemy go free once he has captured him! **But you have done that for me.** I hope that Yahweh will reward you for acting kindly toward me today. **20** Now I know that someday you will surely become king and that you will have a long and successful reign over the kingdom of Israel. **21** So now make me a solemn promise that you will not kill my whole family so that I have no descendants left in my clan. Wish that Yahweh will kill all of your descendants if you do that!"

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

25 **1** Soon after that, Samuel died, and people from throughout Israel gathered and mourned for him.

They buried his body outside his home in Ramah. Then David and his men moved to the desolate area of Paran. **2** In the town of Maon there lived a man who kept his flocks at the nearby village of Carmel. He was very rich. He owned 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. He was shearing his sheep at Carmel at this time. **3** This man's name was Nabal. He was a descendant of Caleb. His wife Abigail was a wise and beautiful woman, but Nabal himself was very cruel. He treated people very unkindly.

4 One day while David and his men were in the desolate area nearby, someone told him that Nabal's workers were cutting the wool off his sheep. **5** So David decided to send ten of his soldiers **to ask Nabal respectfully for some of the food from the celebration he was hosting while they were cutting off the wool**. He told them, "Go to Carmel and visit Nabal and greet him warmly for me. **6** Then tell him this from me: 'I wish you all the best! I hope everything is going well for you and your family and for all of your possessions.

7 I have a small request. People have told me that you now have workers cutting the wool from your sheep. My soldiers and I were in the same area where your shepherds were tending those sheep. But the whole time they were with us near Carmel, we did not harm them, and we did not steal any sheep from them. **8** You can ask your own servants about this, and they will tell you that it is true. We have come here at a time when you are celebrating, so I ask you please to be generous to us and send back with these men something from the feast that you have prepared for this occasion. David regards you respectfully as a benefactor.'"

9 So David's men went to Carmel and told Nabal everything that David had told them to say for him. Then they waited for Nabal to reply. **10** But Nabal replied, "This David, this son of Jesse, does not deserve to receive anything from me! There are many slaves who are running away from their masters at the present time**, and he is just one of them**. **11** I have prepared food and drink for the men who are cutting the wool from my sheep. I have even killed some of my animals so that I can serve them meat. But I am not going to take any of those things and give them to a group of men who are just wandering the countryside."

12 So David's men left and went back and told him all that Nabal had said to them. **13** When he heard this, David told his men, "**We are going to kill Nabal!** Each of you, fasten on your swords!" So they did, and David fastened on his own sword. Then 400 of the men went with David to Carmel, while 200 of them stayed behind to guard their supplies.

14 One of Nabal's servants **found out what David and his men were planning to do, so he** went to Nabal's wife Abigail and told her, "Please listen. David sent some messengers here to speak politely with our master Nabal, but he only yelled at them. **15** All the time that we were close to them while we were in the fields, David's men were very kind to us. They did not harm us, and they did not steal anything from us. **16** The whole time we were with them while we were tending the sheep, they continually kept any people or animals from hurting us and from taking any sheep. **17** So please consider this situation and think of something that you can do about it. David has already decided to hurt our master and all of us in his household. Nabal is a very bad man, so he will not listen to anyone who tries to tell him what he should do."

18 When Abigail heard that, she very quickly gathered 200 loaves of bread, two leather bags full of wine, the meat from five sheep, nearly 40 liters of roasted grain, 100 packs of raisins, and 200 packs of dried figs. She put all those things on donkeys. **19** Then she told her servants, "**Bring these things to David as fast as you can.** Do not wait for me. I will follow you as quickly as I can." But she did not tell her husband what she was doing.

20 Abigail was riding on her donkey, and she was coming down the slope of a hill. Just then David and his men were coming down the slope of an opposite hill. So they met at the bottom. **21** David had been saying to his men, "It was useless for us to protect that man and all his possessions here in this desolate area. We did not steal anything that belonged to him. In return for our good actions toward him, he has acted badly toward us! **22** I hope that God will kill me if by tomorrow morning I have not killed Nabal and every male person in his household!"

23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got down from her donkey and bowed respectfully before him with her face touching the ground. **24** Then she came and knelt at David's feet and said to him, "Sir, I accept the blame for the way we have mistreated you. But now please let me explain, and listen carefully to what I have to say to you. **25** Please do not pay any attention to how this bad man Nabal has insulted you. His name suits him perfectly. His name means 'fool,' and he surely is foolish. Now I did not see the messengers you sent to him. **If I had, I would certainly have given them plenty of food from our feast.** **26** Please listen to me, sir. I swear by Yahweh and I swear by your own life that Yahweh **has allowed me to meet**

you here on the road in order to prevent you from killing many people yourself instead of relying on Yahweh to protect you. I hope that anyone who is trying to hurt you becomes someone that no one should pay any attention to, just like Nabal. **27** You have received the food that I sent on ahead of me. It is a present for you and for the men who are with you. **28** So please forgive this offense, for which I consider myself responsible. Because you have been fighting against Yahweh's enemies, he will certainly make you king of Israel and then allow many of your descendants to become king after you. So please do not do anything terrible that you will regret for as long as you live. **29** Even if someone searches for you to try to kill you, Yahweh your God will make sure that you stay alive, as if he had wrapped you up securely for protection. He will make your enemies die instead. They will die as swiftly as a stone flies that someone hurls from a sling. **30** Yahweh has promised to do good things for you, and he will do all those things for you. He will cause you to become the ruler of the Israelite people. When that happens, **31** you will not feel great guilt and grief. You will not have killed many innocent people yourself instead of relying on Yahweh to protect you. When Yahweh does the good things he has promised to do for you, then you will remember what I told you today and you will be glad that you did what I said."

32 David replied to Abigail, "I thank Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, for sending you to speak with me today. **33** I thank him for your wisdom, and I thank him that you kept me today from killing many people myself instead of relying on Yahweh to protect me. **34** I will swear something to you by Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, who has prevented me from hurting you. If you had not come so quickly to speak with me, not a single male in your household would have still been alive by dawn tomorrow."

35 Then David accepted the gifts that Abigail had brought to him. He told her, "You may return home and not fear that we will attack you. I surely agree with what you told me, so I will do what you have asked."

36 When Abigail returned home to Nabal, she found that he was having a big celebration such as kings have. He was feeling very happy, and he had gotten very drunk. So Abigail did not say anything at all to him that night about her meeting with David. **37** The next morning, when Nabal was no longer drunk, his wife told him how David and his men had been just about to kill him and all the other men in the household. He became so distressed that he had a

stroke and could no longer move. **38** About ten days later Yahweh caused something further to happen to Nabal so that he died.

39 When David heard that Nabal had died, he said, “I praise Yahweh! Nabal insulted me, but Yahweh has shown that I was right. He has prevented me from doing anything wrong, and he has punished Nabal for the wrong that he did to me.”

Then David sent messengers to Abigail to ask her if she would become his wife.
40 David’s servants went to Abigail at Carmel and told her, “David sent us to bring you to him so that you could become his wife.” **41** Abigail got up from where she was sitting and bowed down with her face touching the ground. Then she told the messengers to tell David for her, “I will gladly serve you as your wife. I will do any task you require, even washing the feet of your servants as a slave would do.” **42** Abigail quickly got on her donkey and went with David’s messengers. Five of her female servants went with her. When she arrived where David was, he married her. **43** David also married Ahinoam, a woman from the city of Jezreel **near Carmel**. So both Abigail and Ahinoam were now also David’s wives. **44** King Saul’s daughter Michal was David’s wife, but Saul had given her to Palti son of Laish, who was from the town of Gallim.

26 **1** One day people who lived in the region of Ziph once again went to Saul while he was at Gibeah. They told him, “David is hiding somewhere on the hill of Hakilah, near the desolate area that people call Jeshimon.”

2 So Saul chose 3,000 of the best Israelite soldiers and led them to the desolate area in the region of Ziph to search for David. **3** Saul and his men set up their tents close to the road on the hill of Hakilah, east of the area of Jeshimon, but David and his men stayed in the desolate area. David found out that Saul had come to search for him, **4** He learned that by sending out some spies. They came back and told him that Saul had in fact come to their area.

5 David decided to go at night and look at the place where **the spies told him** Saul’s army had set up its tents. From a distance, he could see where Saul and his army commander, Abner, were sleeping. Saul was sleeping inside a barricade that the soldiers had made with the wagons in which they had brought their supplies. The rest of the army was sleeping all around Saul.

6 When David saw this, he spoke with two of his men who were with him. These men were Ahimelech, who was from the Hittite people group, and Abishai, who was the son of Zeruiah and the brother of Joab. David asked them, “Which of you will go with me down into the camp where Saul is sleeping?”

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

8 Abishai whispered to David, “Today God has enabled you to kill your enemy! This is what I want to do. Allow me to kill Saul by plunging his own spear right through him into the ground. I will only need to strike him once. That first blow will kill him.”

9 But David whispered to Abishai, “No, do not kill Saul. Yahweh has appointed him to be king, so Yahweh will surely punish anyone who kills him.” **10** David continued, “Instead, Yahweh may cause him to die, or he may die of some disease or of old age, or enemy soldiers may kill him in a battle. But I swear by Yahweh **that I will not kill Saul myself**. **11** I hope that Yahweh will never allow me to attack the king whom he has appointed. This is what we should do. Let us just take Saul’s spear and water jug that are near his head. Then we should leave right away.”

12 So David took the spear and the jug that were near Saul’s head. Then he and Abishai left. Yahweh had made Saul and his soldiers very sleepy, so they were all asleep during this time. So no one woke up and saw them or knew what they were doing.

13 David and Abishai went across a valley and climbed up high on a hill opposite Hakilah. They were far away from Saul’s camp.

14 Then David shouted in the direction of Saul’s army. He shouted to Abner, “I want to speak with you, Abner!”

Abner replied “Who are you? You should not be waking up the king by calling out like this!” **15** David replied, “You are a better soldier than any other man in Israel. So you should have protected the king whom you serve. Someone came into your camp tonight, and he could have killed your king. **16** You have failed in your duties as soldiers. I swear by Yahweh that

someone should punish you and your men by executing you! You have not protected your master, whom Yahweh appointed to be the king. Here is proof that someone came into your camp tonight: the royal spear and the water jug that were close to the king's head are now missing!"

17 Saul **woke up and recognized** David by his voice. He called out, "Is that really you speaking to me, David my son?"

David replied, "Yes, your majesty, I am the one speaking."

18 Then David added, "Sir, there is no reason for you to be chasing me. I have done nothing at all to harm you! **19** Your majesty, please listen to me! If Yahweh **is punishing me for sinning** by causing you to want to harm me, I hope he will accept a guilt offering from me **and forgive me**. But if it is people who have caused you to be angry with me, then I hope Yahweh will make bad things happen to them! **If people have convinced you to want to harm me,** they are now forcing me to leave this land that Yahweh has given to the Israelites. By making me leave Israel, it is as if they are telling me to live somewhere else where the people worship different gods! **20** Now do not force me to die away from the land where Yahweh is present in a special way. I am as unimportant as a single flea, so you, the king, do not need to be chasing me! That makes no more sense than chasing one bird into the mountains when many birds of that kind live in nearby fields."

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

22 David replied, "Look, here is your spear! Send one of your young men over here to get it. **23** Yahweh gave me the opportunity to kill you today, but I refused to do that, because you are the one whom Yahweh has appointed to be the king. When people treat others right and are loyal to them **as I have just done for you**, may Yahweh treat them the same way. **24** Just as I considered your life to be valuable **and spared it** today, I hope that Yahweh will consider my life to be valuable and rescue me from every danger."

25 Then Saul said to David, "My son David, I want Yahweh to do good things for you. I know that you will do great things very successfully."

Then David left that place, and Saul went back home.

27 1 But David thought, “Some day Saul will capture me and kill me if I stay here in Israel. So the best thing that I can do is certainly to flee to the region of Philistia. If I do that, Saul will stop searching for me here in Israel, and I will be safe from him.”

2 So David and his 600 men left Israel and went to the city of Gath in the region of Philistia. Achish son of Maoch was the king of that city. 3 Achish agreed that David and his men could live in Gath. So all of the men brought their families there. David brought his two wives with him, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal’s widow, from Carmel. 4 When Saul learned that David had gone to live in Gath, he stopped pursuing him.

5 One day David said to Achish, “If you are pleased with us, give us a place to live in one of the small villages in the countryside. We do not have to live here in the royal city with you.”

6 Achish agreed and gave David the town of Ziklag at that time. (As a result, Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.)

7 David and his men lived in the region of Philistia for a total of 16 months. 8 While they were living there, David and his men attacked communities of the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites. To do that, they went as far south as the region of Shur near the border of Egypt. The people in those communities had lived in that area for a very long time. 9 Whenever David’s men attacked these communities, they killed all of the people who lived in them. Then they took their sheep and cattle and donkeys and camels and clothes. They brought those things back home with them, and David would go to talk with Achish.

10 Each time Achish would ask David, “Where did you go raiding today?” David would lie to him and sometimes say that he and his men had attacked the people who lived in the Negeb within the territory of Judah. Other times, he would say that they had attacked the Jerahmeelites who lived in the Negeb. And at other times, he would say that they had attacked the Kenites who lived in the Negeb. 11 David’s men never brought anyone alive back to Gath. David thought, “If we do not kill everyone, some of them will tell Achish the truth about what we really did.” David did that the whole time that he and his men lived in the region of Philistia. 12 Achish believed what David told him, and he thought, “Because of what David

has done, his own people, the Israelites, must now hate him very much. So he will always have to stay here and serve me."

28 **1** During the time when David was living near Gath, the people of Philistia gathered their army to attack the Israelites. King Achish told David, "You must understand that you and your men have to join my men to attack the Israelites."

2 David replied, "We will go with you, and then you will see for yourself how well we will fight for you!"

Achish told him, "Very well, I will make you my personal bodyguard from now on."

3 By this time, Samuel had died, and the Israelite people had mourned for him. Then they had buried him in Ramah, his hometown. Also, before this, Saul had forbidden anyone in Israel to try to contact people who had died or to try to talk to spirits that could tell them things that people otherwise could not know.

4 The Philistines assembled their troops and marched into Israel and set up their tents near the city of Shunem. Saul gathered the Israelite army, and they set up their tents at Gilboa.
5 When Saul saw how many Philistine soldiers had come to attack the Israelites, he became so afraid that his heart pounded. **6** Saul asked Yahweh to help him know how he should fight against the Philistines, but Yahweh did not answer him. He did not give Saul any special dream. The priest got no answer for him by drawing a stone from his sacred pouch. Yahweh did not give any prophet a message for Saul. **7** Then Saul told his officials, "Find for me a woman who owns a pit that she uses to contact people who have died. That way I can go to her and ask her to contact a dead person who can give me advice." One of his officials replied, "There is a woman in the town of Endor who owns that kind of pit."

8 So that the woman would not know he was the king, Saul took off his royal robes and put on ordinary clothes. Then he and two of his men went during the night to speak with that woman. Saul told her, "I will tell you the name of a dead person. I want you to use your pit to cause that person's spirit to appear so that I can speak with him."

9 But the woman replied, "Certainly you know what Saul has done. He has forbidden anyone in Israel to try to contact people who have died or to try to talk to spirits that can tell

them things that people otherwise cannot know. You should not be putting me in danger by asking me to do this. People would execute me if they found out that I had done it."

10 In response, Saul made her a sacred promise. He said, "I swear by Yahweh, if you do what I ask, no one will punish you."

11 So the woman asked, "Whom do you want me to make appear?"

Saul replied, "Make Samuel appear."

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

13 Saul said to her, "Do not be afraid**, I am not going to execute you**. But tell me what you see."

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

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

Then Saul knew that it was Samuel. To honor him, Saul humbly bowed down with his face touching the ground. **15** Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you bothered me by bringing me back to earth from the place where dead people go?"

Saul said, "I am in great danger. The Philistine army is about to attack my army, but God is no longer helping me. He no longer tells me what I should do by giving a message for me to any prophet or by giving me a dream. That is why wanted to speak with you. I want you tell me what I should do!" **16** Samuel said, "Since Yahweh himself is no longer helping you and has become your enemy, you should not ask me what you should do! **17** He had me prophesy earlier about what he would do, and now Yahweh is doing just what I said. He has decided that you will no longer be the king of Israel. Another Israelite will be the king instead of you—David. **18** The Amalekites made Yahweh very angry. He told you to punish them for him by destroying them completely. But you did not obey him. That is why he is now not telling you how to fight against the Philistines. **19** Yahweh will also enable the Philistine army to defeat you and all the other Israelite soldiers. By tomorrow you and your sons will be with me in the

place where dead people go. Yes, Yahweh will enable the Philistine army to defeat the entire Israelite army."

20 **After Samuel said that, he disappeared.** Saul had been standing up, but he immediately fell flat on the ground. He was very afraid because of what Samuel had told him. He was also very weak because he had not eaten anything all that day and night.

21 The woman came over to Saul and saw how very scared he was. She said to him, "Listen to me! I have done what you asked me to do. Because I did that, you could tell someone to execute me. **22** Since I did what you asked, please now do what I ask. Please let me serve you some food to eat. That way you will get enough strength back to return to your army."

23 But Saul refused. He said, "No, I will not eat anything." But the men who had come with Saul urged him to eat something, and the woman did too, and finally he agreed. He got up from the ground and sat on a couch against the wall.

24 The woman kept a calf in a stall near her house. She quickly slaughtered it and cooked it. She also took some flour and mixed it with olive oil and baked it, without adding any leaven, to make a flat loaf of bread. **25** She served the food to Saul and his men, and they ate it. Then, that same night, they got up and left.

29 **1** The Philistine army assembled at a place that people called Aphek. The Israelites set up their tents **nearby** around a spring in the city of Jezreel. **2** To get to Aphek, the Philistine soldiers marched in groups of 100 soldiers that were parts of larger groups of 1,000 soldiers. The rulers of the Philistines commanded the entire army. David and his men marched at the end of the army with King Achish. **3** But **on the way to the battlefield** the Philistine rulers asked, "These Hebrews should not be here, marching with us to battle!"

Achish replied, "Their leader is David. He previously served King Saul of Israel, but now he has been living near me for more than a year. During all the time since he left Saul, he has been completely loyal to me." **4** But the Philistine rulers became angry with Achish. They said to him, "You must send David and his men back to the city that you gave him! We do not want him to go with us into the battle. If he goes with us, we will have an enemy within our own

army! He would make Saul happy with him again by killing our own soldiers! 5 Do not forget
that David is the one about whom the Israelite women sing as they dance. They sing,

‘Saul has killed thousands of our enemies,
but David has killed tens of thousands of them!’”

6 So Achish summoned David, and said to him, “I swear by Yahweh that I know I can trust
you. I would like very much for you to fight with me in the army. Since the day that you came
to me, you have been completely loyal to me. But the other rulers do not trust you. 7 So you
and your men must go back home. I am not sending you away as an enemy, but as a friend. But
the other rulers of the Philistines do not want you to remain with the army.”

8 David replied, “But I have not done anything wrong! Since the time I first came to you
until now, I have always been completely loyal to you. So you should allow me to come with
you and fight against your enemies!”

9 Achish replied, “I know I can trust you as much as I would trust an angel from God. But
the Philistine commanders have said, ‘We will not allow David and his men to go with us into
the battle.’ 10 So you and the other Israelite men who came to me with you must leave early
tomorrow morning. Get up as soon as it becomes light and leave.”

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

30 1 David and his men got back to Ziklag after marching for two whole days and part of
another day. When they arrived, they discovered that the Amalekites, who had been raiding
towns in the southern Judean wilderness, had also raided Ziklag. When the Amalekites had
attacked Ziklag, they had burned down all the buildings. 2 But they had not killed anyone.
Instead, they had captured all the wives and children of David’s men. They had taken them
with them when they left.

3 When David and his men arrived at Ziklag, they saw that the Amalekites had burned
down the city and that they had captured and taken away their wives and children. 4 David and

his men cried very loudly until they became so weak that they could not cry any more.
5 David's two wives were among the women whom the Amalekites had captured. They were Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal's widow, from Carmel. **6** David's men were very angry that the Amalekites had taken away their wives and children. They were talking about killing David by throwing stones at him. So David was in great danger. But he asked Yahweh his God to help him, and Yahweh made him strong.

7 Then David asked Yahweh to guide him. He told Abiathar the priest, "Please bring the sacred apron over here." So Abiathar brought it over to David. **8** Then David asked Yahweh, "Should I and my men pursue the men who took our families? Will we be able to catch up with them?"

Yahweh answered David by means of the stones in the sacred apron: "Yes, pursue them. Yes, you will catch up with them. Yes, you will be able to rescue your families." **9** So David and the 600 men who were with him set out from Ziklag in pursuit of the Amalekites. When they came to the Besor Ravine, some of men stayed there with their supplies. **10** There were 200 of those men. They stayed there at the ravine because they were too tired to cross it. But David and the other 400 men continued to pursue the Amalekites who had captured their families.

11 Some of David's men happened to find an Egyptian man who was lying in a field. They picked him up and carried him to David. They gave the man some water to drink and some food to eat. **12** They also gave him part of a fig cake and two packs of raisins. The man had not had anything to eat or drink since two days before, but after he ate and drank, he felt refreshed.

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

He replied, "I am a youth from Egypt. I am a slave of an Amalekite man. But I became sick, and it was difficult for me to keep traveling with the raiding band. So the day before yesterday, my master left me here. **14** We had raided the southern Judean wilderness where the Kerethites live. We also raided some other towns in Judah and the southern Judean wilderness where the descendants of Caleb live. We also attacked the city of Ziklag and burned it down."

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

He replied, “Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or give me back to my master. If you promise that, I will take you to them.” **16** **David agreed, so** the Egyptian man led David and his men to where the Amalekites were. Those men had captured many things from the regions of Philistia and Judah, and they had spread out around their camp eating and drinking and celebrating. **17** David and his men slaughtered them from sunset that day until the evening of the next day. There were 400 young men who rode away on camels in order to escape, but none of the other Amalekites escaped. **18** David and his men were able to recover everything that the Amalekites had taken, including David’s two wives. **19** They did not lose anything. They were able to rescue all of their family members. They also recovered all the things that the Amalekites had taken. David and his men brought all of this back to Ziklag. **20** They also took all of the sheep and cattle that the Amalekites had captured from other places. David’s men drove those animals ahead of their own animals. They announced, “These are animals that we captured in battle. They belong to David!”

21 David and his men got back to where the other 200 men were waiting. Those were the men who had not gone with David because they were so exhausted. They had stayed at the Besor Ravine. **When they saw** David and his men **coming**, they went out to greet them. And David greeted them in return.

22 But some of the men who had gone with David were bad men and troublemakers. They said, “These 200 men did not go with us. So we will not give them any of the things that we recovered. We will just allow each of them to take his wife and children and go back to his home.”

23 David replied, “No, my friends, that would not be right. Yahweh protected us and enabled us to defeat the enemies who attacked our city. So what we captured from them was really something that Yahweh gave to us**, and we do not have a right to keep it to ourselves**.
24 None of the rest of us will agree with you about this. Here is what I have decided. The men who stayed here with our supplies will get the same amount as the men who fought in the battle. They will all receive the same amount.” **25** David made that a rule for the Israelite people, and they still follow that rule now.

26 Then David and his men and their families returned safely to Ziklag. The leaders of some of the cities and towns in Judah **had helped David. They** were his friends. David sent them

some of the things that he and his men had captured from the Amalekites. He sent messengers with those things to say, “Here is a present for you. These are things that we took from Yahweh’s enemies.”

27 Here is a list of the cities and towns to whose leaders David sent gifts: Bethel, the city that people call Ramoth that is in the southern part of Judah, Jattir, **28** Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, **29** Racal, the cities where the Jehrameelites live, the cities where the Kenites live, **30** Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athach, **31** Hebron, and all the other places where David and his men had often gone.

31 **1** Meanwhile, the Philistine army attacked the Israelite army. The Israelites ran away from them to Mount Gilboa. But the Philistines killed many of them there. **2** The Philistines caught up with Saul and the three of his sons who were fighting with him. They killed all three of them, Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi Shua. **3** The fighting became very fierce around Saul. The Philistine archers realized that he was the king of Israel, so they aimed many arrows at him and wounded him badly.

4 Saul told the man who was carrying his weapons, “Take out your sword and kill me with it! That way these pagan Philistines will not come and kill me slowly with many small wounds and make fun of me while I am dying.”

But the man who was carrying Saul’s weapons was too afraid to do that. So Saul took out his own sword and threw himself on it. **The sword went deep into his body and killed him.**
5 When the man carrying his weapons saw that Saul had died, he also threw himself on his own sword. He died next to Saul. **6** So Saul, three of his sons, and the soldier who carried Saul’s weapons all died on that same day. So did all of the other Israelite soldiers who fought around Saul and protected him.

7 The Israelite people who lived in the area north of the Valley of Jezreel and west of the Jordan River learned that the Israelite army had run away and that Saul and his sons had died. **They knew that no one would now defend them from the Philistines, so** they left their homes and ran away. Then the Philistines came and occupied the cities and towns that area.

8 The day after the battle, the Philistine soldiers returned to take the weapons, armor, and clothing from the Israelite soldiers whom they had killed. They found the bodies of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa. **9** They cut off Saul's head and took his weapons. Then they sent messengers throughout their land to proclaim the news of their victory in the temples where they worshiped their idols and publicly among the people. **10** They put Saul's weapons in the temple of their goddess Asherah. They also fastened the bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall that surrounded the city of Beth Shan.

11 The people who lived in the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead learned what the Philistines had done to Saul's corpse. **12** All their bravest soldiers marched all night to Beth Shan. They took the bodies of Saul and his sons down from the city wall. They brought their bodies back to Jabesh and burned them there. **13** Then they took the bones and buried them under a big tamarisk tree in Jabesh **like the one Saul would sit under when he was with his royal court**. Then, to show how sad they were, they ate very little food for seven days.

2 Samuel

1 **1** After they defeated the Amalekites, David and the men who were with him returned to the city of Ziklag. By that time, the Philistines had already killed Saul. David and his men stayed there that day and the next one **without receiving any news of the battle between the Philistines and Israelites**. **2** But on the day after that, a young man unexpectedly arrived there who had been in the camp where Saul's soldiers had set up their tents. He had torn his clothes and put dust on his head to show that he was grieving. He came to David and knelt down and lay flat on the ground **to show respect for him**.

3 David asked him, "Where have you come from?" The man replied, "I have fled here from the camp where the Israelite soldiers set up their tents."

4 David asked him, "What happened? Please tell me about the battle!" The man replied, "The Philistines defeated our army so badly that our soldiers ran away. The Philistines killed many of them. They even killed King Saul and his son Jonathan."

5 David asked the young man who told him this, "How do you know that the Philistines killed Saul and Jonathan?"

6 The young man replied, "As it happened, I was on Mount Gilboa **where the Israelites had fled from the Philistines**. I saw Saul. **He was wounded and** leaning on his spear **for support**. I noticed that the Philistine chariot drivers and the commanders of their soldiers on horseback **had seen him, and they all** were rushing toward him. **7** Saul turned around and saw me, and he called out to me. I called back, 'What do you want me to do?'

8 He asked me, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am an Amalekite.'

9 Then he said to me, 'I can no longer fight, because I am in such pain from my many wounds. But those wounds will not kill me. So please use one of the weapons here to kill me yourself.'

10 I knew that the Philistines would soon come and kill him, so he was not going to live anyway. So I used one of the weapons there to kill him. Then I took the crown he had been wearing and his armband. Here they are for you to see, sir."

11 Then David took hold of his clothing and ripped it **to show how sad he was** All the men who were with him ripped their clothes as well. **12** They felt very sad, and they cried. They did not eat anything for the rest of that day. This was to honor and remember Saul and his son Jonathan and all of the Israelite soldiers whom the Philistines had killed in the battle. They were also very sorry for all of the Israelite people**, who had lost their king and many of their men and much of their territory**.

13 But then David asked the young man who had told him about the battle, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I come from an Amalekite family, but we are living here in Israel."

14 David told him, "You should have respected Saul as the man whom Yahweh chose to be the king of Israel and not dared to kill him!" **15** Then David summoned one of his soldiers and told him, "Come over here and kill this man!" So the soldier came over and killed him.
16 David said to the Amalekite, "You yourself said, 'I killed the man whom Yahweh appointed to be the king.' So you admitted that you were guilty and deserved to die!" **17** Then David composed a sad song about Saul and Jonathan. **18** He called this song "The Bow." **When David became the king of Judah shortly afterward,** he told his officials to teach this song to the people of Judah. You can find the words in the Book of Jashar**. These are the words to the song**:

> **19** "You Israelite people, the Philistines have pursued your great warriors even onto the mountains and killed them there!
>
> It is very sad that these strong soldiers have died!
>
> **20** Do not let anyone who lives in cities such as Gath and Ashkelon find out about this!
>
> Otherwise, the women among the pagan Philistines will have victory celebrations.
>
> **21** The shield of Saul, that mighty king, remains on the ground on Mount Gilboa.
>
> No one is caring for it by rubbing it with olive oil.
>
> So I hope there will never be rain or dew there again **so that the shield does not rust**.

I hope that there is so little rain that the fields do not even produce the small amount of grain that someone would bring as an offering.

22 When Jonathan shot arrows from his bow at enemy soldiers, the arrows struck them so that they bled and died.

When Saul stabbed strong men with his sword, he wounded them so deeply that they died.

23 People loved Saul and Jonathan. They delighted many people during their lives. And they died fighting together against their enemies.

They were warriors who could run fast, as eagles fly fast, and who were strong, as lions are strong.

24 You women in Israel should mourn for Saul.

He made Israel a safe and prosperous place in which you had beautiful scarlet clothes and expensive jewelry and gold ornaments to wear.

25 It is very sad that Jonathan, that strong soldier, has died while fighting a war!

The Philistines pursued him even onto a mountain and killed him there.

26 Jonathan, my dear friend, I grieve for you. You were very dear to me.

You loved me in a wonderful way. It was much better than the fleeting feelings of romance that men and women have for each other.

27 It is very sad that these strong soldiers have died.

Saul and Jonathan are not using their sword and bow anymore."

2 **1** Sometime after that, David asked Yahweh, "Should I return to Judah and live in one of the cities there?" Yahweh replied, "Yes, return to Judah." Then David asked, "To which city should I go?" Yahweh replied, "You should go to Hebron."

2 So David went to Hebron. He brought his two wives with him. They were Ahinoam, who was from the city of Jezreel, and Abigail, who was from the city of Carmel. She had been married to Nabal before he died. **3** David also brought the men who had been with him, together with their families. They all settled in the city of Hebron and in the surrounding towns and villages. **4** Then the men who were the leaders of the tribe of Judah came to Hebron. One of them poured olive oil on David's head to show they were appointing him to be the king of the tribe of Judah. Someone told David how soldiers from the city of Jabesh in the region of

Gilead had recaptured Saul's body **from the wall of Beth Shan** and how the people of that city had buried his body honorably.

5 So David sent messengers to the people who lived in that city. He told the messengers to tell them, "I hope that Yahweh will do good things for you because you buried Saul's body honorably. By doing that, you treated Saul with the loyalty that he deserved as your king. **6** So this is what I hope will happen. I hope that Yahweh will be just as loyal to you all the time. And I will personally do good things for you because of the good way you treated Saul. **7** Now this is what I hope you will do. Even though Saul, who was your king, has died, do not become discouraged. Instead, continue to fight bravely against the Philistines. The people of the tribe of Judah have appointed me to be their king**, and I will lead their army to come and help you as soon as I can**."

8 But instead, Abner son of Ner, who had been Saul's army commander, brought Ish Bosheth son of Saul across the Jordan River to the city of Mahanaim. **9** So that Ish Bosheth could rule over it, Abner steadily reconquered the territory that the Philistines had captured from the Israelites. Ish Bosheth first ruled the region of Gilead east of the Jordan River, which the Philistines had not captured. Abner then reconquered the territory west of the Jordan River and north of the Valley of Jezreel, where the people of tribes such as Asher lived. Abner then reconquered the Valley of Jezreel itself. He then reconquered the territory west of the Jordan River and south of the Valley of Jezreel, where the people of tribes such as Ephraim lived. Abner was able to reconquer that territory all the way south to the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. That made Ish Bosheth the king of all the territory that would later be the northern kingdom of Israel**after it divided from the southern kingdom of Judah**.

10 Ish Bosheth son of Saul was 40 years old when he started to rule over the Israelite people. He ruled them for two years. But David was the king of the people of the tribe of Judah. **11** David ruled them for seven and a half years while he was living in Hebron.

12 One day Abner son of Ner led some soldiers from the army of Ish Bosheth son of Saul across the Jordan River from Mahanaim to the city of Gibeon. **13** Joab son of Zeruiah led a group of David's soldiers from Hebron to Gibeon. They found Abner and his soldiers near the large pool of water there. Joab had his soldiers stay on one side of the pool and sit down. Abner had his soldiers sit down on the other side.

14 Then Abner said to Joab, “Let us have some of our soldiers fight each other while the rest of us watch!” Joab replied, “Yes, let us do that!”

15 So Abner chose 12 men from his own tribe of Benjamin to fight on behalf of Ish Bosheth son of Saul. They went over to the other side of the pool and fought against 12 soldiers whom Joab chose to fight on behalf of David. **16** Each soldier grabbed the man he was fighting against by the hair. That enabled him to thrust his dagger into that man’s side. The result was that these 24 soldiers all killed each other. That is why people now call the place near Gibeon where they fought Helkath Hazzurim.

17 Then the two whole groups of soldiers started fighting each other. It was a very fierce battle. But as they fought, David’s soldiers defeated Abner and the soldiers from the other tribes of Israel.

18 Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, Zeruiah’s three sons, were in that battle. Asahel was able to run very fast, the way wild gazelles run very fast. **19** When Abner fled from the battle, Asahel chased him. No matter which way Abner went to try to escape, Asahel kept following him. **20** Abner looked behind him to see who was chasing him. He called out, “Is that you, Asahel?” Asahel answered, “Yes, it is!”

21 Abner shouted back, “Chase somebody else! Try to catch one of the younger soldiers and defeat him and take his armor.” But Asahel would not stop chasing Abner.

22 So Abner shouted at him again, “Stop chasing me! Do not make me fight you, because I would kill you. Then I could never again have a peaceful relationship with your brother Joab, because he would want to get revenge against me.”

23 But Asahel refused to stop chasing Abner. So Abner let Asahel nearly catch him, then he suddenly stopped and swung the butt end of his spear into Asahel’s stomach as he was still running fast toward him. The force was so great that the end of the spear went right through Asahel’s stomach and came out his back. Asahel was wounded so badly that he fell down and died right there. When other soldiers came to the place where Asahel’s dead body was lying in the roadway, they all stopped and stood there.

24 But when Joab and Abishai saw what had happened, they ran off in pursuit of Abner. At sunset they came to the hill of Ammah, which is near the town of Giah along the road that leads into the desolate area near Gibeon. **25** The soldiers who had come with Abner were from the tribe of Benjamin. He had regrouped them into a line of battle on the top of that hill.

26 Then Abner called out to Joab, "We should not continue this deadly battle any longer! You must realize that if we continue fighting, many people will suffer great harm. We are all Israelites, so please tell your soldiers right now to stop chasing us!"

27 Joab replied, "Even if you had not said that, I would certainly have told my soldiers tonight to stop chasing their fellow Israelites. I swear by God that this is true."

28 Then Joab blew a long, loud note on a ram's horn to signal that his soldiers should stop fighting. So all his men stopped where they were and no longer pursued the soldiers from the other tribes of Israel. That was the end of that battle.

29 That night Abner led his soldiers back through the Jordan River valley. They crossed the river and marched all the next morning. Then they finally arrived back at Mahanaim.

30 After his soldiers stopped chasing Abner, Joab gathered them all together. He counted them, and he found out that besides Asahel, 19 of them had died in the battle. **31** But David's soldiers had killed 360 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin and among the soldiers from other tribes who had come to Gibeon with Abner. **32** Some of Joab's soldiers carried Asahel's body from the battlefield to the town of Bethlehem and buried it in the same tomb where people had buried his father. Then Joab and his soldiers marched all through the night, and at dawn they arrived back home at Hebron.

3 **1** After that, the people who wanted Saul's son to be the next king fought a long war against those who wanted David to be the king. As the war continued, more people began to support David, while fewer people supported Saul's son. **2** After David moved to Hebron, his wives gave birth to sons. The oldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam from the city of Jezreel. **3** The next son was Chileab, whose mother was Abigail, the widow of Nabal, from the city of Carmel. The next son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, the king of the region of Geshur. **4** The next son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith.

The next son was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital. **5** The youngest son was Ithream, whose mother was Eglah, another one of David's wives. Their mothers all gave birth to these sons of David in Hebron.

6 During the war between those who wanted Saul's son to be the next king and those who wanted David to be the king, Abner became a powerful leader among those who wanted Saul's son to be the king. **7** Saul had a secondary wife whose name was Rizpah. Aiah was her father. One day Ishbosheth accused Abner of having sexual relations with her.

8 Abner became very angry about what Ish Bosheth said to him. He said to Ish Bosheth, "I am not some disloyal person from the tribe of Judah! From the beginning I have been loyal to Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends. And I have kept David's army from defeating you. So you should not be accusing me now of doing something wrong with this woman! **9-10** Yahweh solemnly promised David that he would make him the next king instead of one of Saul's descendants. He promised to make David the ruler not just of the tribe of Judah but also of all the other tribes of Israel. He promised that David would rule all the territory extending from the city of Dan far in the north to the city of Beersheba far in the south. I am going to make that happen! If I do not, may God take away my position and my possessions and do even worse things to me." **11** What Abner said made Ishbosheth so afraid of him that he could not say anything to him in reply.

12 Then Abner sent some of his men to David at Hebron with this message: "I am the most powerful leader among the other tribes of Israel. So if you make an agreement with me, then I can help you. I will make all the people of Israel want you to be their king." **13** David told the messengers to tell Abner. "All right, I am willing to make an agreement with you. But there is one thing you must do. Otherwise, I will not meet with you so that we can make that agreement in person. When you come to meet with me, you must bring my wife Michal, Saul's daughter, to me." **14** **Abner agreed to get Michal for David.** So David sent messengers to Ish Bosheth to tell him, "I killed 100 Philistine soldiers and cut off their foreskins to give to Saul to pay for Michal to be my wife. So now, give her back to me!"

15 Saul had taken Michal away from David and given her to Paltiel son of Laish. But Ish Bosheth sent some men to take Michal away from Paltiel. **16** But when they took her, Paltiel

followed her, crying as he went along. But when they reached the city of Bahurim, Abner told him, “You must go back home!” So he did.

17 **Before going to see David,** Abner had sent messengers to the Israelite leaders to tell them, “I know that for a long time you have wanted David to be your king. **18** So this is what you should do. Make him your king now. Keep in mind that Yahweh spoke of David as someone who served him well. Remember that he said he would use David to rescue us Israelites, his people, from the Philistines and all the other enemies who would oppress us.” **19** Abner had also spoken personally with the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin**, to which Saul had belonged**. The people of that tribe and of all the other Israelite tribes had agreed to make David their king. So Abner went to Hebron to tell David that personally.

20 Abner respectfully brought 20 of his soldiers with him when he went to see David at Hebron. David served a feast to all of them. **21** After they had eaten, Abner said to David, “Sir, I know that you have wanted to be the king of all the Israelites. Let me now go and get leaders from all the tribes of Israel and bring them here so they can make an agreement with you to be their king.” David agreed, and he allowed Abner and his men to leave safely.

22 While Abner was visiting with David, Joab was leading David’s soldiers to attack some of their enemies. They defeated those enemies and captured many valuable possessions. When they brought what they had captured back to Hebron, Abner was no longer there, since David had already sent him away safely. **23** When Joab and the soldiers who were with him arrived, someone told Joab that Abner had come there and talked with the king and that the king had allowed Abner to leave safely.

24 So Joab went to the king and said, “You should not have done that! Listen to me! You had Abner, the commander of your enemy’s army, right here where you could have made him your prisoner. But instead, you allowed him to leave, and now he has gotten away! **25** You know what kind of person Abner son of Ner is! He only pretended that he wanted to make an agreement with you. He really wanted to find out how you lead your armies and what plans you were making!”

26 Then Joab left David and sent some messengers to get Abner. They found him at the cistern of Sirah and brought him back to Hebron. David did not know that they had done this. **27** When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab pretended he wanted to speak with him privately. He

led him into the shaded area between the inner and outer gate in the city wall. But there he stabbed Abner in the stomach and killed him. Joab did that to get revenge against Abner for killing his brother Asahel.

28 David later found out what had happened. He said, “I was not involved in any way in the murder of Abner son of Ner. So may Yahweh never punish me or any of my descendants who are kings after me for his death. **29** May Yahweh punish Joab and his relatives instead. I hope that there will always be someone in his family who has sores or who is a leper or who cannot walk without a crutch or who dies in battle or who does not have enough food to eat!”

30 **David cursed Joab in this way because it was not right for** Joab and his brother Abishai to have murdered Abner. He had killed their brother Asahel in battle at Gibeon**, so they should not have taken revenge**.

31 Then David told Joab and all of his soldiers, “I want you to tear your clothes and wear rough cloth **to show that you are sad that Abner has died**!” When men carried Abner’s body to his grave in a casket, King David walked right behind it **to honor him**. **32** They buried Abner’s body at Hebron. At Abner’s grave, King David cried loudly, and all the other people also cried.

33 Then King David sang a sad song about Abner. He sang, “It was not right for Abner to die like a criminal! **34** No one tied his hands or put chains on his feet, as they would have done if he had been guilty of a crime. No, men murdered him unjustly!” After the other people heard David sing this song for Abner, they cried even more sadly.

35 Later that day some people came and invited David to join in the customary funeral meal. But David refused **since he wanted to go without eating to show how sad he was that Abner had died**. He said, “I swear that I will not even taste any kind of food for the rest of this day **on which we buried Abner**! If I do, I hope that God will make very bad things happen to me.” **36** Everyone who was present at the funeral saw what David did, and it pleased them, just as other things that King David had done had pleased the people he ruled.

37 **Because he had mourned deeply and sincerely for Abner,** the people of the tribe of Judah and the people of all the other tribes of Israel realized then that King David had not wanted Joab to kill Abner. **38** King David told his officials, “I hope you realize that a great leader has now died in Israel. **39** Even though Yahweh appointed me to be the king, I now feel weak.

These two sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai, are very violent. I cannot control them. So I hope that Yahweh will punish them as they deserve for this wicked thing that they have done!”

4 **1** When Saul’s son Ishbosheth heard that Joab had killed Abner at Hebron, he lost his courage. The people of the Israelite tribes he ruled worried greatly about what would happen next. **2** Two of the officers who led groups of soldiers for Ishbosheth were brothers whose names were Baanah and Rechab. Their father was Rimmon. They came from the city of Beeroth. People considered them to be Benjaminites because Beeroth is within the territory that Joshua assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. **3** (But the **original Gibeonite** inhabitants of Beeroth had fled to the town of Gittaim, and they are still staying there now.)

4 Saul’s son Jonathan had a son whose name was Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was five years old when Saul and Jonathan died in the battle at Jezreel. When people came to Gibeah and told what had happened, Mephibosheth’s nursemaid picked him up and ran away **to escape from the Philistines**. She ran so fast that she dropped him. That injured his legs, so that he could no longer walk well.

5 One day, Rimmon’s sons Rechab and Baanah traveled to Ish Bosheth’s house. They arrived there at the hottest time of the day. Ish Bosheth was lying on a bed in a cool part of his house where he rested when it was hot. **6-7** Rechab and Baanah acted as if they were going into the house to get some wheat to give to their soldiers. This allowed them to get as far into the house as Ish Bosheth’s private bedroom. He was asleep on his bed. They killed him by stabbing him in the stomach with their swords. Then they cut off his head. Rechab and Baanah fled from the house, carrying Ish Bosheth’s head. They walked all night through the plain along the Jordan River **8** so they could go to Hebron. When they got there, they presented Ish Bosheth’s head to David. They told him, “Here is the head of Ish Bosheth, the son of your enemy Saul, who tried to kill you! Your Majesty, today Yahweh has allowed you to get revenge on Saul and his descendants.”

9 But David replied to them, “I swear by Yahweh, who was the one who kept Saul from killing me, that what I am about to say is true. **10** When a messenger came to Ziklag and told me that he had killed Saul, he thought he was bringing news that I would be glad to hear. But instead, I told one of my soldiers to kill him. He expected me to reward him for bringing this news, but I gave him what he really deserved. **11** If I punished him by killing him, I should

certainly do the same to you. You two evil men murdered a man who had done nothing wrong, and you killed him while he was sleeping on his bed in his own house! Because you murdered him, it is right for me to punish you by executing you. I am going to remove you completely from the earth!”

12 Then David gave orders to his soldiers, and they killed Rechab and Baanah. They cut off their hands and their feet and hung them near the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ish Bosheth and buried it respectfully in the tomb of Abner, there at Hebron.

5 1 Then the leaders of all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron. They told him, “Listen, even though we belong to different tribes, we are all Israelites. 2 Previously, even though Saul was our king, you were the one who led our soldiers into battle. Yahweh promised you, ‘You will be the leader of the Israelite people, who belong to me. You will be their king.’”

3 Then, with Yahweh as their witness, all the leaders of the people of Israel came and made an agreement with David at Hebron that he would be their king. They poured olive oil on his head to show that he was now the king of the Israelites. 4 David was 30 years old when he first became the king of Judah. He was a king for a total of 40 years. 5 In Hebron, he had ruled over the tribe of Judah for seven and a half years. He would then rule over all the people of Judah and Israel for 33 more years in Jerusalem.

6 Once he became king, David led his soldiers to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebusites who lived there. The Jebusites believed that David’s army would never be able to capture their fortress in the city. So they called out mockingly to David, “Even our soldiers who have become blind or crippled will be able to keep you from getting inside our city walls!” 7 But David’s army did indeed capture the fortress on Mount Zion. (Later David named it the City of David.) 8 On that day, David told his soldiers, “In order to attack the Jebusites, crawl up through the water supply tunnel into the city. That is how you will get to those crippled and blind soldiers who can supposedly defeat us. They are my enemies!” (Because David called them his enemies, people now say that no one who is blind or crippled may enter the royal palace.)

9 After David and his soldiers captured the fortress, David moved into it. That was when he named it the City of David. David had people build more buildings in the area between the

fortress and the Millo. **10** David continued to become more and more powerful because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, was helping him.

11 One day Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, sent ambassadors to **make a peace treaty with** David. Hiram agreed to provide cedar trees to make lumber, and he also agreed that he would send carpenters and stone masons to build a palace for David. **12** Because Hiram did these things, David realized that Yahweh truly wanted him to be the king of Israel. He also realized that Yahweh wanted him to be a powerful king so that he could protect the Israelites, since Yahweh had chosen them as his own people.

13 After David moved from Hebron to Jerusalem, he married more women as wives and secondary wives. All of those women gave birth to more sons and daughters of David. **14** The names of his sons whom his wives bore in Jerusalem were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, **15** Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, **16** Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

17 When the Philistines learned that the Israelites had made David their king, they assembled their army, and it marched toward Jerusalem to try to capture David. But David learned that they were coming, so he left the city and went to another place where he would be safe. **18** The Philistine army marched into the Valley of the Raphaites **southwest of Jerusalem** and set up its battle lines there. **19** David asked Yahweh, "Should I lead my soldiers to attack the Philistine army? Will you enable us to defeat them?" Yahweh replied, "Yes, attack them, because I will definitely enable your army to defeat them."

20 So David led his army to where the Philistine army was, and they defeated them there. Then David said, "Yahweh enabled us to break through the enemy battle lines just as a flood of water breaks through a dam!" So David named that place Baal Perazim. **21** The Philistine men left their idols there, and David and his soldiers took them away.

22 But after that, the Philistine army marched into the Valley of the Raphaites again and set up its battle lines there once more. **23** So David asked Yahweh again what he should do. Yahweh replied, "Do not attack their battle lines directly. Tell your soldiers to go around them and attack them from the back. Come through the grove of balsam trees. **24** You will hear the sound of an army marching in the tops of the balsam trees. When you do, you will know that I am going ahead of you to enable your army to defeat the Philistine army. So when you hear

that sound, attack them right away." [25] So David did what Yahweh told him to do. His soldiers defeated the Philistine soldiers and chased them from the city of Geba all the way west to the city of Gezer.

6 [1] After this, David assembled all of his best soldiers once again. There were 30,000 of them. [2] He led them to the city of Baalah in Judah so that they could bring the sacred chest from there to Jerusalem. People call that chest "The Box of Yahweh, the Commander of the Heavenly Armies." Yahweh himself is invisibly present between the statues of the winged creatures on top of it. [3] They went to the hilltop house of Abinadab. They used a new cart to carry the chest from there. Two oxen were pulling the cart, and Abinadab's two sons Uzzah and Ahio were guiding them. [4] In order to bring the sacred chest from Abinadab's hilltop house, Ahio walked in front of the cart, while Uzzah walked alongside it. [5] David and his soldiers and a large crowd of other Israelites were singing and dancing in Yahweh's presence. People were playing musical instruments to accompany the singing and dancing, including wooden instruments, harps, lyres, tambourines, rattles, and cymbals.

[6] But when they came to the place in the area of Nacon where people threshed grain, the oxen tripped. Because that made the cart tilt so that the sacred chest might have fallen off of it, Uzzah put his hand on the sacred chest to steady it. [7] Yahweh immediately became very angry with Uzzah for touching the chest. God killed him right there next to it.

[8] David became angry because Yahweh had punished Uzzah. David called that place Perez Uzzah, and that has been its name ever since.

[9] Then David became afraid of what else Yahweh might do to punish them, and he said, "It is too dangerous for me to try to bring the sacred chest to where I live in Jerusalem!" [10] So David decided not to bring the sacred chest to the City of David where he lived. Instead, he had the people take it into a house that was there by the road. A man whose name was Obed Edom the Gittite lived in that house. [11] The sacred chest stayed in the house of Obed Edom for the next three months. During that time, Yahweh made good things happen for him and his whole family.

12 After that time, people told King David, “Because Obed Edom is taking care of the sacred chest, Yahweh is making good things happen for his family and all of his servants!” When David heard that, he **gathered many of the Levites and** went to Obed Edom’s house. Together they very joyfully brought the sacred chest from there to the City of David. **13** On the way, once the Levites who were carrying the sacred chest had taken their first six steps, David had them stop. Right at that place, David killed a bull and a fat calf and offered them to Yahweh as sacrifices. **14** David was wearing just a plain linen robe. He danced to honor Yahweh, leaping as high as he could and whirling around fast. **15** David and a large crowd of Israelites brought the sacred chest to Jerusalem, shouting loudly and blowing ram’s horns.

16 While they were bringing the sacred chest into the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul**, his wife, was on an upper floor of her house. She** looked through a window down onto the street. She saw **her husband** King David leaping and whirling to honor Yahweh. That made her feel disgusted with him **because she did not think a king should dress and act that way**.

17 David had put up a tent for the sacred chest, and the Levites carried the sacred chest into it and set it up there. Then David made some offerings to Yahweh that he completely burned on an altar. He made other offerings whose meat the people could share at a meal to celebrate this happy occasion. **18** When David finished offering those sacrifices, he asked Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, to do good things for the people. **19** Then he gave special gifts of food to all the Israelites who had come for the celebration. To each man and woman he gave a loaf of bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake. Then they all returned to their homes.

20 Then David went home to ask Yahweh to do good things for his family. **His wife** Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him. She told him, “As the king of Israel, you should not have acted so disgracefully today! You took off almost all of your clothes, and you let the female servants of your officials see you that way! Only immoral men take off their clothes in public as you did.”

21 David replied to Michal, “I danced in that simple way in order to honor Yahweh! He chose me instead of your father or any member of his family to be the king of the Israelite people, who belong to him. I was celebrating to honor Yahweh! **22** And so I am willing to act

even more humbly than that. I will do things that seem undignified. But those female servants you were talking about will respect me **as a king who serves Yahweh devotedly**!"

23 Michal daughter of Saul did not have children for as long as she lived.

7 **1** King David was living in his palace, and Yahweh caused the enemy people groups that surrounded the Israelites to stop attacking them. **2** So one day David said to the prophet Nathan, "Consider that I live in a palace that King Hiram's craftsmen built for me from cedar wood. But the sacred chest is only in a tent **rather than a splendid temple**!"

3 Then Nathan told King David, "Yahweh will help you, so you may do what you want to do."

4 But that night, Yahweh **appeared to** Nathan and told him, **5** "Go and give my servant David this message from me. He is not the one who will build a temple to hold the sacred chest on which I am invisibly present. **6** I have not been especially present in any building from the time when I brought the Israelites here from Egypt until now. Instead, I have been present in my sacred tent, moving from one place to another with the people. **7** I went with the Israelites wherever they traveled, but I never told any of the leaders whom I appointed to rule them that they should have built a temple for me out of cedar wood. **8** So give my servant David this message from me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. Although he worked out in the fields caring for his father's sheep, I appointed him to become the king of my Israelite people. **9** Remind him that I have protected him wherever he has gone. I have enabled him to defeat all the enemies who attacked him. Now I will make him very famous. He will become as famous as the greatest people who have ever lived on earth. **10-11** When my Israelite people were slaves in Egypt, violent people oppressed them. They also oppressed them in this land during the time when I was appointing judges to lead them. But this will not happen anymore. I have made a place where my people can live, and I will enable them to keep living there. They will no longer be afraid. I will make all their enemies stop attacking them. Tell David that I promise that I, Yahweh, will enable his descendants to rule as kings. **12** Tell David that after he has lived out his life and died, I will appoint one of his own sons to be king. One of his wives will give birth to this son in the future. I will make sure that he remains the king. **13** Assure David that that son of his will build a temple for me. No one will ever replace him as the king.

14 It will be as if I am his father and he is my son. When he does something wrong, I will
punish him the way human fathers properly punish their sons. **15** But I will never stop showing
kindness to David and his descendants the way I stopped showing kindness to Saul. I made
him no longer the king so that David could become the king. **16** So assure David that his
descendants will continually rule the kingdom of Israel after him. No other family will ever
replace them as the royal family."

17 Nathan went and told David everything that Yahweh had told him when he appeared to
him.

18 **When he heard Nathan's message,** King David went into the sacred tent and sat in
Yahweh's presence. He prayed, "Yahweh, my master, I am not a very important person, and I
do not come from a very important family. So I do not deserve any of the things that you have
done for me already. **19** And yet, Yahweh my Lord, you are telling me that you want to do
even more for me. After all, you have now told me that my descendants will reign over Israel
long into the future! And you have said that you will require people to obey them as their
kings. **20** Yahweh my Lord, I am not able to say anything further to you. But you know me so
well that you know what I would say if I could say it. **21** You are going to do a wonderful
thing **and make my descendants kings after me**. You are going to do this because you promised
to make me a king, and because it is what you really want to do. It was also wonderful for you
to tell me about this now. **22** This shows how great you are, Yahweh my Lord. We have never
heard of any other God besides you. The gods that the people of other nations worship are
nothing like you. **23** No other nation in the world is like us, your Israelite people. None of the
gods that other people groups worship rescued them so that those people would belong to
them. You rescued us from being slaves in Egypt. You also rescued us from enemy nations **here
in Canaan** that thought their gods would enable them to defeat us. You did miracles to enable
us to settle in this land. Because of the powerful things you have done, people throughout the
world now respect you. **24** You caused us Israelites to be your people forever, and you,
Yahweh, have become our God! **25** Yahweh, my God, you have promised to do wonderful
things for me and my descendants. So please do make those things you said happen always.
26 When that happens, you will become famous forever. People will exclaim, 'Yahweh, the
commander of the heavenly armies, is the God who rules Israel!' And you will make sure that a
descendant of mine will always rule the Israelites. **27** I am confident that you will do this,

because you, Yahweh, have chosen us Israelites to be your people. You have revealed to me that you will make some of my descendants kings. For that reason, I have been bold enough to pray like this to you. **28** So now, Yahweh my Lord, because you are God, we can trust that you will do what you promise. You have promised to do these good things to me. **29** So now I pray that it will please you to do good things for my descendants. Please enable them to keep ruling your Israelite people. Yahweh my Lord, you have promised these things, and so I know that you will always keep doing good things for my descendants."

8 **1** Some time later, David and his army defeated the Philistine army. They captured Metheg Ammah and made the Philistines subject to the Israelites.

2 David and his army also defeated the Moabite army. Afterwards, David forced their soldiers to lie down on the ground **close to each other in a long line**. His soldiers went down the line and measured two lengths of a rope. They killed all of the Moabite soldiers in that part of the line. Then they measured one length of that rope and let the Moabite soldiers in that part of the line live. They continued to do this all the way down the line. The rest of the Moabites had to accept David as their ruler. Every year they had to give him the payment that he demanded.

3 David's army also defeated the army of Hadadezer son of Rehob, who ruled the region of Zobah in Aram. That happened when Hadadezer led his army out to try to get control over the territory that bordered the Euphrates River. **4** David's army captured 1,700 of Hadadezer's soldiers who were chariot drivers, and they also captured 20,000 footsoldiers. They crippled most of the horses that had pulled chariots. But they spared 100 of the horses **for their own use**.

5 Then an army of Arameans from the kingdom whose capital was the city of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer's army. But David's soldiers killed 22,000 of those Arameans. **6** Then David stationed groups of his soldiers in that kingdom. Those Arameans had to accept David as their ruler. Every year they had to give him the payment that he demanded. Each time David led his soldiers into battle, Yahweh enabled them to win victories over their enemies.

7 Some of Hadadezer's soldiers had carried shields that had a plating of gold. King David's soldiers captured those shields and brought them to Jerusalem. **8** They also brought to Jerusalem large quantities of bronze from Betah and Berothai, two cities in Hadadezer's kingdom.

9 When Toi, the king of the city of Hamath, heard that David's army had defeated the
entire army of King Hadadezer, **10** he sent his son Joram to make a peace treaty with King
David and to congratulate him for defeating Hadadezer's army. Toi congratulated David
because Hadadezer's army had fought many times against his own army. Joram brought David
many articles of gold, silver, and bronze as gifts.

11 King David dedicated all those items to Yahweh, just as he had dedicated the silver and
gold that his army had captured from the nations they had conquered. **12** They had taken
valuable items from the Arameans, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, and Amalekites. They
had also captured many valuable items from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

13 David became even more famous after his army killed 18,000 Aramean soldiers in a
battle in the Valley of Salt.

14 David stationed groups of his soldiers throughout the region of Edom. The Edomites
had to accept him as their king. Each time David led his soldiers into battle, Yahweh enabled
them to win victories over their enemies.

15 So David ruled over all the Israelite people. As king, he decided the people's cases, and
he judged them fairly. **16** Joab son of Zeruiah was the army commander. Jehoshaphat son of
Ahilud was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided that they should
do. **17** Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the
official secretary. **18** Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's elite corps of
bodyguards. David's sons were his advisors.

9 **1** One day David asked some of his officials, "Are there any descendants of Saul still
living? I promised Jonathan that I would act kindly toward his family, and I would like to do
that if I can."

2 They told him that Saul's family had a household official whose name was Ziba. So
David sent messengers to summon Ziba. When he arrived, King David asked him, "Are you
Ziba?" He replied, "Yes, your Majesty, I am."

3 Then King David asked him, “Is there anyone still alive in Saul’s family toward whom I can act kindly, as I promised God that I would do?” Ziba replied, “Yes, there is one son of Jonathan who is still alive. But he is not able to walk.”

4 Then the king asked him, “Where is he?” Ziba replied, “I can tell you that he is living in the house of Machir son of Ammiel in the city of Lo Debar.”

5 So King David sent messengers to Machir’s house in Lo Debar, and they brought Mephibosheth to Jerusalem.

6 When Mephibosheth came to David, he knelt down with his face on the ground, to show respect. Then David said, “Mephibosheth.” He replied, “What may I do for you, your Majesty?”

7 David said to him, “Do not be afraid. You can be sure that I am going to be kind to you because Jonathan your father was my friend. I will give back to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul. And I want you to always eat meals with my family in the royal palace.”

8 Mephibosheth bowed in front of David again and said, “Sir, I am as worthless as a dead dog. I do not deserve for you to act kindly toward me!”

9 Then the king summoned Saul’s servant Ziba. He told him, “I am now giving Mephibosheth everything that belonged to your master Saul and his family. **10** You and your sons and your servants must plow the land and plant crops and harvest them for Mephibosheth’s family. That way they will have food to eat. Mephibosheth will eat meals regularly with me in my palace.” (Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants.)

11 Ziba replied to the king, “Your Majesty, I will do everything that you command me to do about this.” After that, Mephibosheth always ate with David’s family as if he were one of his sons.

12 Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. All of Ziba’s family and servants became servants of Mephibosheth. **13** So Mephibosheth came to live in Jerusalem, since he always ate meals with David’s family in the royal palace. He was still not able to walk, because he had injured both of his legs.

10 1 Sometime later, Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, died. His son Hanun became the
next Ammonite king. 2 David thought to himself, “Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to
his son Hanun.” So David sent some of his officials to tell Hanun that David was sorry that
Hanun’s father had died. When those messengers arrived in the land of Ammon,

3 the Ammonite military leaders said to King Hanun, “You should not think that when
David sent these men to tell you he is sorry that your father died, he did that to honor your
father. He sent them here to look around the city to determine how his army can conquer us!”
4 **Hanun believed what they said.** So he commanded some of his soldiers to seize David’s
officials and **insult them by** shaving off one side of their beards. He also had them cut off the
lower part of their robes so that their buttocks would show. Then he made them leave Ammon
and go back to Israel.

5 This made the men feel very ashamed. When David found out about what Hanun had
done to his officials, he sent messengers to meet them on their way back to Jerusalem. **The
messengers met them at the city of Jericho.** They told the men, “The king says you may stay here
at Jericho until your beards have grown back and only return home after that.”

6 Then the Ammonite leaders realized that they had greatly insulted David. So they sent
some men to hire some soldiers from other nearby areas to help defend them. They hired
20,000 soldiers from the Aramean regions of Beth Rehob and Zobah. They also hired 1,000
soldiers from the army of the king of Maacah and 12,000 soldiers from the region of Tob.

7 When David heard about that, he sent Joab with all of the best Israelite soldiers to fight
against them. 8 The Ammonite soldiers came from their city and formed a battle line in front
of its wall. At the same time, the foreign soldiers whom their king had hired from Zobah,
Rehob, Tob, and Maacah formed a separate battle line in the open fields nearby.

9 Joab saw that there were enemy armies in front of his troops and behind his troops. So he
chose some of the best Israelite soldiers and put them in position to fight against the soldiers
who were in the fields. 10 He told his brother Abishai to command the rest of the soldiers.
They would oppose the Ammonite soldiers who had formed a battle line in front of their city
wall. 11 Joab told Abishai, “If the soldiers from Aram are too strong for my men to defeat, then
your men must come and help us. But if the Ammonite soldiers are too strong for your men,

then my men will come and help them. 12 We must be strong and fight hard so that our enemies do not defeat us and then come and kill our people and destroy the cities in Israel, where we worship the true God. We will depend on Yahweh to make the right army win this battle."

13 Then Joab and the soldiers he commanded advanced to attack the army of Aram. They defeated the Arameans so badly that the Arameans ran away from them. 14 When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans were running away, they also ran away from Abishai and the soldiers he was commanding. They retreated back inside their city. So Joab and his army stopped fighting against them and went back to Jerusalem.

15 The Arameans thought about how the Israelite army had defeated them. They decided to gather a much bigger army. 16 King Hadadezer summoned a great number of soldiers from the Aramean kingdoms that were on the other side of the Euphrates River. They gathered at the city of Helam. Hadadezer had his own army commander, Shobach, lead this army.

17 When David learned about this, he gathered all of the Israelite fighting men and led them across the Jordan River. They marched to Helam. The Aramean army formed a battle line there, and the two armies fought. 18 The Israelites defeated the Arameans so badly that the Aramean soldiers ran away from the Israelite soldiers. David and his army killed 700 of their chariot drivers and 40,000 other soldiers. They also wounded Shobach, Hadadezer's army commander, so badly that he died on the battlefield. 19 Then all the kings who has been Hadadezer's subjects thought about how the Israelites had defeated their combined armies. They decided to make a peace treaty with the Israelites. They agreed to accept David as their king. The Arameans would not help the Ammonites anymore after that, because they were afraid of Israel.

11 1 The following spring, at the time when kings usually led their armies to fight against their enemies, David sent out his commander Joab with his officers and the rest of the Israelite army. They fought the Ammonites and severely defeated them. Then they surrounded Rabbah, their capital city, and tried to capture it. But David himself stayed in Jerusalem.

2 Late one afternoon, after David had finished sleeping during the heat of the day, he got up and walked around on the flat roof of his palace. From there, he could look down and see a

woman who was bathing in the enclosed courtyard of her house. The woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to find out who she was. He returned and told David, “That woman is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam. She is the wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

4 But David sent messengers to get her anyway. They brought her to David, and he had sexual relations with her. (She had just finished performing the rituals to make herself pure after her menstrual period.) Then Bathsheba went back home. 5 Later, she realized that she was going to have a child. So she sent a messenger to tell David this news.

6 So David sent a message to Joab. He said, “Tell Uriah the Hittite to come back to Jerusalem so that I can speak with him.” So Joab sent Uriah to go and speak with David. 7 When he arrived, David asked whether Joab was well, whether the other soldiers were well, and whether the Israelites were doing well fighting the war. 8 Then David told Uriah, “Now go home and relax for a while.” So Uriah left, and David sent someone to bring some special food to Uriah for him to enjoy. 9 But Uriah did not go home. Instead, he slept at the palace entrance with the palace guards.

10 The next morning, someone told David that Uriah had not gone to his house that night. So David summoned him again. He asked him, “Why did you not go home and relax last night? You needed to rest after walking so far to get here.”

11 Uriah replied, “The soldiers of Israel and Judah are camping in the open fields. Even our commander Joab and his officers are sleeping in tents like the rest of us. We brought the sacred chest with us, and it is also in a tent. **As a soldier who is part of this military campaign,** it would not be right for me to go to my home, enjoy food and drink, and have sexual relations with my wife. I swear by your life that I would never do such a thing!”

12 Then David said to Uriah, “Stay here another day, and I will let you return to the battle tomorrow.” So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and that night. 13 That evening, David invited Uriah to dine with him in the palace. David gave Uriah so much wine to drink that he got drunk. But after the meal, Uriah still did not go home. Instead, he slept that night on a cot in a room with the palace guard.

14 David **found out that Uriah had not gone home, so** the next morning he wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to bring to him. 15 In the letter, he wrote, “Put Uriah in the front line

at the place where he will be in the greatest danger. Then command the soldiers who are supporting him to retreat. That way our enemies will wound him so badly that he will die."

16 When Joab got the letter, he carefully observed the city's defenses. He found a place where the Ammonites had put many of their best soldiers. So he put Uriah in the front line there. 17 The Ammonite soldiers came out from that part of the city and fought with Joab's soldiers. They killed several of David's soldiers. Uriah was one of the soldiers they killed.

18 Then Joab sent a messenger to bring David news about what had happened in the battle. 19 He told the messenger, "Tell David the news about what happened in the battle. Once you finish telling him, 20 David may become angry because we allowed the Ammonites to kill some of our soldiers. He may tell you, 'Your soldiers should not have gone so close to the city to fight! You should have known that the Ammonite soldiers would shoot arrows at you from the top of the city wall! 21 You must remember how Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth died! A woman who lived in Thebez threw a heavy millstone onto him from the top of a tower, and that killed him. So our troops should not have gone near the city wall!' If the king says this, then tell him that his soldier Uriah the Hittite also died in the battle."

22 So the messenger went and told David everything that Joab had told him to say. 23 The messenger said to David, "The Ammonite soldiers organized an attack against us. They came out of the city to fight against us in the fields. We were able to force them to retreat right back to the city. 24 But then their archers shot arrows at us from the top of the city wall. They killed some of your soldiers, and Uriah the Hittite was one of the soldiers they killed."

25 David said to the messenger, "Go back to Joab and tell him, 'Do not feel badly about what happened, because no one ever knows who might die in a battle. Make an even stronger attack against the city and conquer it.' Encourage Joab by telling him those things."

26 When Uriah's wife Bathsheba heard that her husband had died, she mourned for him. 27 After her time of mourning ended, David sent messengers to bring her to the palace, and he married her. She later gave birth to a son whose father was David. But Yahweh was very displeased with what David had done.

12 **1** Yahweh told the prophet Nathan what David had done, and he sent Nathan to correct David. Nathan came and told him a story **to help him recognize that he had done was very wrong**. He said, “Once there were two men in a certain city. One man was rich and the other was poor. **2** The rich man owned a lot of sheep and cattle. **3** But the poor man had only one little female lamb, which he had bought. He raised the lamb, and it grew up with his own children. He would give the lamb some of his own food and let it drink from his cup. He let the lamb sleep as he held it next to him. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

4 One day a visitor came to see the rich man. The rich man did not want to take one of his own sheep or cattle and kill it to prepare a meal for his guest. Instead, he sent men to take the poor man’s lamb. Then he had someone kill it and prepare it as a meal for his guest.”

5 When David heard that, he became very angry with the rich man. He told Nathan, “I swear by Yahweh that I want to execute the man who did that! **6** **I cannot actually execute him, but at least** he must pay back four lambs to the poor man for so cruelly taking his one lamb.”

7 Nathan said to David, “You have acted like the man I told you about. Now this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you: ‘I was the one who chose you to be the king of Israel. When Saul was trying to kill you, I was the one who rescued you. **8** I gave you all of his property. I let you marry the women who had been his wives and concubines. I made you king over Israel and Judah. And if you had told me that you were not content with all that I had given you, I would have given you even more! **9** But you have not taken seriously what I commanded **when I said that my people must not commit adultery or murder**. You have done things that I consider to be very evil! You arranged for Uriah the Hittite to die in battle, and after the Ammonite soldiers killed him, then you took his wife as your own wife! **10** You did not respect me. Instead you took Uriah’s wife to be your wife. As a result, people in your family will constantly be killing each other.’ **11** This is what Yahweh says to you: ‘I am going to make someone from your own family cause disaster for you. I will take your wives away from you and give them to that person instead. He will have sexual relations with them in public. And you will know about it. **12** While you tried to make sure that no one found out about what you did, I will make this happen in public. That way people throughout Israel will either see it or hear about it.’”

13 David replied, “I have sinned against Yahweh.” Nathan said to David, “Yahweh has forgiven you for sinning. He is not going to punish you by killing you for committing this sin. **14** But you have shown great contempt for Yahweh by doing this. So the son you have just had is going to die.”

15 Then Nathan went home. Uriah’s wife had given birth to a baby boy who was David’s son. Yahweh caused him to become very sick. **16** So David prayed to God that the child would not die. **To show how concerned he was,** he ate very little food. He also did not sleep in his bed at night. Instead, he slept on the floor of his room. **17** His most senior servants came and urged him to get up off the floor. But he refused to get up, and he refused to eat any meals with them.

18 After a week, the baby died. David’s servants were afraid to tell him that. They said to each other, “Consider that while the baby was still alive, we encouraged him to take better care of himself, but he refused. Now if we tell him that the baby has died, he may do something to hurt himself!”

19 David saw that his servants were whispering something to each other. He recognized that the baby must have died. So he asked them, “Is the baby dead?” They replied, “Yes, he is dead.”

20 Then David got up from the floor. He bathed himself, put olive oil on his hair and skin, and put on different clothes. Then he went to Yahweh’s sacred tent and worshiped him there. After that, he came home. He asked his servants to bring him some food, and when they did, he ate it.

21 Then his servants said to him, “We do not understand why you have done this! While the baby was still alive, you cried for him and refused to eat. But now that the baby has died, you have gotten up and eaten some food!”

22 He replied, “While the baby was still alive, I ate little food and wept because I thought, ‘Perhaps Yahweh will be merciful to me and allow the baby to live.’ **23** But now that the baby is dead, there is no reason for me to go without food anymore. I cannot bring him back to me. Someday I will go to where he is, but he will not return to me.”

24 Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba. He had sexual relations with her, and she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. David named this boy Solomon. Yahweh loved that little boy. **25** Yahweh told the prophet Nathan to tell David to name the baby boy Jedidiah, since he loved him.

26 Meanwhile, Joab's soldiers were still fighting to conquer Rabbah, the Ammonite capital city. They captured the part of the city where the king had his palace. **27** Then Joab sent messengers to David to tell him, "My troops have been attacking Rabbah, and we have captured the part of the city that is down by the river. **28** Now assemble all the rest of our soldiers. Come and attack the fortress that is on higher ground and capture it. If you do not do that, my soldiers will capture the fortress, and then people will give the whole city a new name, The City of Joab."

29 So David assembled the rest of the Israelite soldiers. They went to Rabbah and attacked it, and they captured it. **30** Then David took the golden crown off the head of their king and put it on his own head. It weighed 34 kilograms, and it had a very valuable stone in it. David's soldiers also took many other valuable things from the city. **31** Then the Israelite soldiers brought the Ammonite people out of the city and forced them to work for them using saws, iron picks, and iron axes. David's troops also forced them to make bricks. David's soldiers made the people who lived in the other Ammonite cities work for them in the same way. Then David and all of his army returned to Jerusalem.

13 **1** After this, the trouble that Nathan had announced began in David's family. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar. Another of David's sons, Amnon, wanted to have sexual relations with her. **2** He wanted so badly to have sexual relations with his half-sister Tamar that he felt sick. But because she was an unmarried young woman**, she lived separately from the men in the palace, so** Amnon thought he would never have a relationship with her.

3 But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab. He was the son of David's brother Shimeah. Jonadab knew well how to deceive people in order to get what he wanted.

4 One day Jonadab said to Amnon, “Even though you are the king’s son, every day **when I see you,** you seem depressed. Please tell me why.” Amnon replied, “I feel sexual desire toward Tamar, the sister of my half-brother Absalom.”

5 Jonadab said to him, “Lie down on your bed and pretend that you are sick. Your father will come to visit you. **Tell him that you do not feel like eating anything, but you might eat** if someone prepared food while you were watching so you could see what the person was doing and if the person then served you the food directly. Suggest that you half-sister Tamar could come and do this for you.”

6 So Amnon lay down and pretended that he was sick. When King David came to visit him, Amnon told him, “**I might eat something if** someone made a couple of pancakes for me while I was watching and then served them to me directly. Please allow my half-sister Tamar to come and do that for me.”

7 So David sent a message to Tamar in the palace. He told her, “Amnon your half-brother **is sick, so** please go to his house and prepare some food for him **so that he will eat**.” **8** So Tamar went to Amnon’s house. He was lying on a couch there. While he was watching her, she took some dough and kneaded it, then she formed it into some pancakes and baked them. **9** She brought the pan and served the pancakes from it onto a plate in front of Amnon. But he refused to eat them. He said to everyone else who was present, “All the rest of you, leave me!” So they all left.

10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, “**I need to lie in bed, so** bring the food into my bedroom and serve it to me there.” So Tamar brought the pancakes that she had made into his bedroom.
11 But when she brought them close for him to eat them, he grabbed her and told her, “I want to have sex with you!”

12 She replied, “No, do not force me to have sex with you! Israelites should not do things like that. You are my half-brother! So do not commit this crime against me! **13** If you did, I would always have shame afterwards. And as for you, you would be acting like the Israelite men who do wrong things without regard for God. So I plead with you, ask the king **to allow you to marry me**. I am sure he would agree to let me become your wife.” **14** But he refused to do what she said he should do. He was stronger than she was, so he forcibly had sexual relations with her.

15 Afterwards, Amnon felt great hatred toward her. He hated her much more than he had desired her. He told her, “Now I want you to leave!”

16 But she told him, “No! You should not send me away. That would be very wrong. It would be worse than what you just did to me!” But again he refused to do what she said he should do.

17 Instead, he summoned his personal servant and told him, “Take this woman outside, away from me, and lock the door so that she cannot come in again!” **18** So the servant put her outside and locked the door so that she could not come in again. Now Tamar was wearing a long robe. That was the clothing that the unmarried daughters of the king customarily wore at that time.

19 But **to show how distressed she was,** Tamar put ashes on her head. She tore the long robe that she was wearing. She also placed her hand on her head. As she went away, she kept screaming.

20 Her brother Absalom **saw her and** said to her, “Did your half-brother Amnon force you to have sex with him? Please, my sister, do not tell anyone. He is your half-brother. Do not let this bother you.” Then Tamar went to live in Absalom’s house, and she never got married.

21 When King David learned what had happened, it made him very angry **but he did not do anything about it**. **22** Absalom hated Amnon because he had forcibly had sexual relations with his sister Tamar. But he did not say anything to Amnon about this**, because he did not want Amnon to suspect that he wanted to kill him**.

23 However, two years later, Absalom hired men to cut the wool off his sheep at Baal Hazor, where he lived. That place is near the tribal land of Ephraim. He was going to host a celebration when they finished cutting the wool off the sheep, and Absalom invited all the king’s sons to come to the celebration. **24** Absalom went to King David and said to him, “Sir, I have workers shearing my sheep **and we are going to celebrate when they finish**. Please come with your officials to celebrate with us!”

25 But the king replied, “No, my son, it would not be good for all of us to come. That would be too great an expense for you.” Absalom kept inviting him, but King David finally refused. Instead, he said that he hoped that God would make them happy while they celebrated.

26 Then Absalom said, “If you will not come, please send my half-brother Amnon **the crown prince** with us **as your representative**.” But the king replied, “You do not need to invite him to the celebration either.”

27 But Absalom insisted, and finally King David agreed to let Amnon go with Absalom. He sent all of his other sons with him.

28 At the celebration, Absalom told his servants, “Pay attention to these instructions. Once Amnon has become a bit drunk from the wine, I will shout out, ‘Kill Amnon!’ When I say that, you must kill him. Do not be afraid. You will be doing this only because I told you to do it. So be very brave **and do it**!” **29** So Absalom’s servants did what Absalom told them to do. They killed Amnon. When the rest of David’s sons saw what had happened, they left the celebration. They got onto their mules and escaped by riding away fast.

30 While they were still on their way home, someone **who had fled when the servants first killed Amnon** rushed back and reported **incorrectly** to David, “Absalom has killed all of your other sons! None of them is still alive!” **31** When King David heard this, he got up from his throne, tore his clothes, and then lay down on the ground **to show how sad he was**. His officials also tore their clothes, and they stood around him **to show their sympathy**.

32 But Jonadab, the son of David’s brother Shimeah, said, “Your Majesty, please do not believe that Absalom has killed all your sons. I am sure that only Amnon is dead. I say this because Absalom has wanted to kill him ever since the day that Amnon raped his sister Tamar. **33** So, your Majesty, please do not let the thought that all your sons may be dead cause you great distress. I am sure that only Amnon is dead.”

34 (Absalom had fled **from the celebration after his servants killed Amnon**.) One of the city guards looked out and saw a large crowd of people coming around from behind a hill on the road from the west **and reported this to King David**.

35 Jonadab said to the king, “You see, what I told you is true. Your other sons are alive,
and they are coming here now.”

36 And as soon as he said that, David’s sons came in. They were all crying loudly, and
David and all his officials also cried very much.

37 Absalom fled for safety to the kingdom of Geshur, where his grandfather Talmai son of
Ammihud was the king. King David mourned continually for his son Amnon. 38 When
Absalom fled to the kingdom of Geshur, he stayed there for three years. 39 King David had
intended to attack Absalom to capture him and punish him for killing Amnon. But by the end of
those three years, David was not grieving as severely that Amnon had died, so he no longer
planned to attack Absalom.

14 1 But Joab recognized that the king was still angry with Absalom. 2 So Joab sent
someone to the city of Tekoa to bring to him a woman who was very clever. When she arrived,
Joab said to her, “I want you to look very sad, as if you are grieving because someone you love
has died. Put on the clothes that people wear who are mourning. Do not put any olive oil on
your hair or skin. Act as if you are a woman who has been mourning for a long time for
someone who has died. 3 Then go to King David and tell him what I tell you to say.” Then
Joab told her what to say.

4 So the woman who was from Tekoa went to the king. She got down and lay flat out in
front of him to honor him, and then she cried out, “Your Majesty, please help me!”

5 The king replied, “What is your problem?” She replied, “Sadly I am a widow. My
husband died some time ago. 6 I had two sons. But one day they quarreled with each other
while they were working out in the field. There was no one to separate them, and one of them
hit the other one so hard that he killed him. 7 Now, all of my extended family has come to me
and insisted that I surrender to them my son who is still alive. They want to kill him to punish
him for killing his brother. But if they do that, I will not have any son to inherit my late
husband’s land and the family will take it. My son is the only relative I have left. If they kill
him, my husband will have no living descendants to preserve our family’s name.”

8 Then the king said to the woman, “I will forbid anyone to punish your surviving son by killing him. So you may go back home **without appealing any further**.”

9 The woman from Tekoa replied to the king, “Your Majesty, **let me reassure you that** if my son actually is guilty of murder and deserves to die, then I will accept the blame and expect Yahweh to punish me and my family. May Yahweh not punish you or the kingdom of Israel because you have said that no one should kill my surviving son.”

10 The king said to her, “If anyone continues to demand that you surrender your surviving son for execution, bring that person to me. I will make sure that he never causes you trouble again.”

11 Then the woman said, “Your Majesty, please swear by Yahweh your God that you will do this. That way the relative who would be responsible to kill my son if he had actually murdered his brother will not kill him and cause someone further to die in my family.” David replied, “I swear by Yahweh that I will not allow anyone to hurt your son at all.”

12 Then the woman said, “Your Majesty, please allow me to say one more thing to you.” He replied, “Speak!”

13 The woman said, “You have been acting badly toward God’s people. Based on the judgment you have just given, you have been doing the wrong thing. **Since you take circumstances into account when judging cases of manslaughter,** you should allow your son Absalom**, our crown prince,** to return home. **14** Consider that all of us are going to die. Like water that no one can pick up from the ground once someone has spilled it, death is permanent **so you should reconcile with Absalom while you are both still alive**. And it is not God who makes people die **even to punish them when they have done wrong things**. Instead, God forgives people who have sinned against him so that they can once more be in a good relationship with him.

15 I came to appeal to you, Your Majesty, because I was very afraid that the members of my extended family would kill my son. I said to myself, ‘I will go and talk to the king, and maybe he will do what I ask him to do. **16** Perhaps he will listen to me and save my son from the man who is trying to kill him. If that man kills my son, I might die too **without his support**. Then we would both no longer be a part of the Israelite community.’

17 And I decided, ‘What the king says will comfort me, because he is like an angel of God. He knows how to determine what is right and what is wrong.’ I pray that Yahweh your God will help you.”

18 In response King David told the woman, “I am going to ask you about something, and I want you to tell me the whole truth about it.” The woman replied, “Go ahead and ask, Your Majesty**, and I will answer truthfully**.”

19 The king said, “Did Joab arrange for you to do all this?” She replied, “I swear by your life, Your Majesty, that it is not possible to say otherwise than you have said! Yes, it was in fact Joab who told me to come here, and he was the one who told me what to say. **20** Joab did that to try to get you to feel differently about this matter. But Your Majesty, you seem to be as wise as one of God’s angels. You know what is happening throughout your kingdom**, and that is how you knew that Joab sent me here**.”

21 Then King David had his servants bring Joab to him. David told Joab, “Listen! I have decided to do what you want. So you may go and get that young man Absalom and bring him back here to Jerusalem.”

22 Joab got down and lay flat out in front of David to honor him. Then he asked God to do good things for him. Then Joab said, “Your Majesty, now I know that you are pleased with me, since you have agreed to do what I asked.”

23 Then Joab did what David had said he could do. He went to Geshur and got Absalom and brought him back to Jerusalem. **24** But King David had said that while Absalom could live in his own house again, he could not come and speak with him. So Absalom lived in his own house, but he did not go and speak with the king.

25 Now people throughout Israel praised Absalom for being a very handsome man. He did not seem to have any flaws in any part of his body. **26** Absalom wore his hair long and only cut it once a year when it became too heavy on his head. When he cut his hair, he would weigh it, and **because it was so thick** it always weighed nearly a kilogram. **27** Absalom had three sons. He also had a daughter, whose name was Tamar. She was a very beautiful woman.

28 Even though Absalom had lived in Jerusalem for two entire years, David had still not allowed him to come and speak with him. 29 So Absalom sent a messenger to ask Joab to come and speak with him. Absalom wanted to ask Joab to help him receive permission to speak with King David. But Joab refused to come and speak with Absalom. So Absalom sent another messenger to ask Joab to come and speak with him. But Joab still would not come.

30 Then Absalom told his servants, "Here is what I want you to do. Joab owns a piece of land next to my land, and he has barley growing there. Go over and start a fire there to burn up the barley." So Absalom's servants went over and started a fire, and it burned up all the barley.

31 Joab realized who must have started the fire, so he went to Absalom's house and demanded to know, "Why did your servants burn up the barley that was growing on my piece of land?" 32 Absalom replied, "I had them do that because when I sent messengers to ask you to come and speak with me, you refused. I wanted you to go to the king and tell him on my behalf that it seemed useless for me to have come here from Geshur and that I thought it would have been better for me to stay there. Now please get the king to allow me to come and speak with him. Tell him that if he is keeping me away to punish me for doing something wrong, he can go ahead and execute me!" 33 So Joab went to the king and told him what Absalom had said. Then the king sent messengers to bring Absalom to the royal court. Absalom came to the king and, to honor him, he knelt down in front of him with his face touching the ground. Then the king indicated that Absalom could get up, and he kissed Absalom on the cheek to show that he was no longer hostile to him.

15 1 Soon afterwards, Absalom got a chariot and horses to pull it. He hired 50 men to run in front of him while he was riding around Jerusalem in the chariot. 2 And Absalom would also go and stand by the city gate starting early each morning. When a person came toward the gate so they could go into the city and ask the king to decide a case for him, Absalom would call out to him. He would ask what city he was from. Then the person would tell him what city and tribe he was from. 3 Then Absalom would ask the person about his case and tell him, "It certainly seems to me that you deserve to win your case. But the king is not able to decide everyone's case, and he has not appointed anyone else to judge cases for people like you." 4 Absalom would then add, "I should really be a judge for all the Israelites. That way anyone who had a legal case could come to me, and I would decide it fairly."

5 And whenever anyone approached Absalom and started to bow respectfully in front of him, Absalom would reach out and hold him up and kiss him on the cheek. **6** Absalom acted this way toward every Israelite who came to King David to ask him to judge a case. As a result, the Israelites began to wish that Absalom were their king instead of David.

7 After four years, Absalom went to King David and said, "I made a promise to Yahweh. Please allow me to go to the city of Hebron so that I can do what I promised. **8** I ask this because when I was living in Geshur, in Aram, I promised Yahweh that if he made it possible for me to return to Jerusalem, then I would worship him in Hebron **and thank him publicly**."

9 The king replied, "You have my permission to go." So Absalom went to Hebron.

10 But while he was there, he secretly sent messengers throughout the territory of all the tribes of Israel. The messengers told people, "When you hear the sound of people blowing rams' horns, shout, 'Absalom has become the king at Hebron!'" **11** There were 200 men who came from Jerusalem to Hebron with Absalom. But they came because he had invited them to the feast he was going to host there. They were not part of his conspiracy. They knew nothing about what he was planning to do. **12** King David had an advisor whose name was Ahithophel the Gilonite. While Absalom was offering sacrifices at Hebron, he sent messengers to bring Ahithophel from his home in the city of Giloh. Many other people also came and joined Absalom **in his rebellion against David**.

13 Then someone came to David and warned him, "The Israelites now want Absalom to be their king!"

14 So David told all the officials in his royal court, "We must leave immediately if we want to escape from Absalom! We must go quickly, before he and his men arrive. If we do not do that, they will kill us and everyone else in the city!"

15 The king's officials replied, "Very well, your Majesty, we are ready to do whatever you wish."

16 So King David quickly left Jerusalem. His family and officials went with him. But David left ten of his secondary wives at the palace to take care of it. **17** Many of the people of Jerusalem also left the city with King David. They stopped at the edge of the city **to organize an**

orderly retreat. 18 David stepped out of the roadway so that his officials could walk past him.
He also let his elite corps of bodyguards go in front of him to lead the way. The 600 men who
had been David's soldiers when he fled to the city of Gath also walked by in front of him.

19 Then David said to Ittai, a military commander who had come from Gath to serve David,
"You do not need to come with us. You may safely return to Jerusalem and serve whoever is
the king. After all, you are not an Israelite, and this is not your own country, so people will
consider you to be impartial. 20 You have lived here in Israel for only a short time. And we do
not even know where we will be going. So it is not right for me to make you come with us now
and wander around with us. Please return to your country and take your troops with you. May
people treat you kindly and be loyal to you."

21 But Ittai replied, "Your Majesty, I swear by Yahweh and I swear by your own life that I
will go wherever you go. I will fight to defend you even if I have to die doing that."

22 David replied to Ittai, "Very well, please come with us!" So Ittai and all his troops and
their families went with David.

23 All the people who lived along the road cried loudly when they saw King David and the
people with him walking by. Since Absalom would be coming from the southwest, the king and
the others crossed the Kidron Valley and then went up the hill on the road that goes through the
desolate area east of Jerusalem.

24 Zadok the high priest had also left the city. He had brought the sacred chest of God.
Some Levites were with him, and they were carrying it. But they did not carry it across the
Kidron Valley right away. Instead, they set it on the ground. Abiathar, the other high priest, went
up the Mount of Olives on the other side of the valley and stood thereuntil all of the people fleeing
from Jerusalem had gone by, and then he came back down to where the sacred chest was.

25 Then the king told Zadok, "I want you to take the sacred chest back into Jerusalem. If
Yahweh chooses to be kind to me, someday he will allow me to return and see the sacred chest
in the place where he is especially present. 26 But if he says that he is not pleased with me,
then I am willing for him to do to me whatever he thinks is right."

27 He also told Zadok, “Now listen to what I want you to do. Go back to the city
peacefully. Take your son Ahimaaz with you. Abiathar should also take his son Jonathan, and
you should both go back. 28 This will be the plan. I will wait in the wilderness at the place
where people can walk across the Jordan River until you send a message to me telling me what
I should do.” 29 So Zadok and Abiathar carried the sacred chest back to Jerusalem, and they
remained in the city.

30 Then David walked up the Mount of Olives. He was crying as he walked. To show that
he was very sad, he covered his head with part of his cloak. He also took off his sandals. All the
people who were walking with him also covered their heads, and they too cried while they
walked. 31 Then someone told David that Ahithophel had joined the Israelites who were
rebelling against David and supporting Absalom as their king. So David prayed, “Yahweh,
please make Ahithophel give Absalom bad advice!”

32 When they arrived at the top of the hill, where there was a place where people
worshiped God, David unexpectedly met Hushai the Archite. To show that he was very sad,
Hushai had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head. 33 David said to him, “If you come with
me, you will make us travel more slowly. 34 But if you return to the city, you can help me by
telling Absalom, ‘Your Majesty, I will be your advisor. In the past, I was your father’s advisor.
But just as I advised him then, so I will advise you now.’ If you do that, you will be able to
help me by countering any good advice that Ahithophel gives to Absalom. 35 Zadok and
Abiathar the priests are already there. Whatever you hear people say in the king’s palace, tell it
to Zadok and Abiathar. 36 Keep in mind that Zadok’s son Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son
Jonathan are there. Whatever any of you find out, send them to report it to me.”

37 So David’s friend Hushai returned to the city. He arrived just as Absalom was entering
Jerusalem.

16 1 When David and the others had gone a little way past the top of the hill, he
unexpectedly met Mephibosheth’s servant Ziba. He had two donkeys with him that were
carrying 200 loaves of bread, 100 bunches of raisins, 100 bunches of fresh figs, and a leather
bag full of wine.

2 The king said to Ziba, “What is all this for?” Ziba replied, “The donkeys are for your
family to ride on. The bread and the fruit are for your soldiers to eat. And the wine is for
anyone to drink who becomes tired in this desolate area.”

3 The king said, “Where is Mephibosheth, the grandson of your former master Saul?” Ziba
answered, “You should know that he has remained in Jerusalem, because he thinks that now
the Israelites will allow him to rule their kingdom as his grandfather Saul did.”

4 The king said to Ziba, “In that case, everything that belonged to Mephibosheth is now
yours.” Ziba replied, “Your Majesty, I will humbly serve you. I hope that you will always be
pleased with me.”

5 When King David and those with him arrived at the city of Bahurim, a man whose name
was Shimei unexpectedly came out of his house to meet him. Shimei’s father was Gera. They
were members of the same clan that Saul’s family belonged to. Shimei kept cursing David as
he approached. **6** Then he threw stones at David and his officials. David’s soldiers and
bodyguards surrounded David **to try to protect him from the stones**. **7** Shimei cursed David and
said to him, “Go away and never come back, you murderer, you scoundrel! **8** Yahweh is
punishing you for killing so many people who were Saul’s relatives and supporters. You took
Saul’s place as king, and now Yahweh is making your son Absalom take your place as king.
You are getting what you deserve for killing so many people!”

9 Then Abishai said to the king, “Your Majesty, this man is as worthless as a dead dog!
You should not allow him to curse you! Permit me to go over there and cut off his head!”

10 But the king replied, “I do not agree at all with what you two sons of Zeruiah want to
do. If he is cursing me because Yahweh told him to curse me, then no one should challenge
him for doing that.”

11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his officials, “You know that my very own son is
trying to kill me. So it is not surprising that this man from the tribe of Benjamin also wants me
to die. Just ignore him and let him curse me if Yahweh has told him to do that. **12** Perhaps
Yahweh will see how much trouble I am having and decide to make good things happen to me
instead of the curses that this man is shouting at me today.” **13** So David and those who were
with him continued walking along the road. Shimei walked along the hillside next to the road,

and as he walked along next to them, he kept cursing David and throwing stones and dirt at him. **14** King David and the people who were traveling with him were very tired by the time they got to the place where people can walk across the Jordan River. But they were able to get a good rest there.

15 While that was happening, Absalom and all the Israelites who were supporting him had arrived in Jerusalem. Ahithophel had also arrived there. **16** Then David's friend Hushai came to Absalom and said, "May you, the king, live a long time!"

17 Absalom said to Hushai, "You have been a loyal friend of my father David for a long time. So I do not understand why you did not leave Jerusalem with him."

18 Hushai replied, "Yahweh has chosen you to be the king. So have all these people here, and so have all the other Israelites. So I will now be loyal to you and stay here in Jerusalem with you. **19** Besides, it makes sense for me to serve you. After all, you are his son. Just as I served in your father's royal court, in the same way, I will serve in your royal court."

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "What would you advise that we should do?"

21 Ahithophel replied, "Your father left some of his secondary wives in the palace to take care of it. I advise you to have sexual relations with them. When people throughout Israel hear that you have done that, they will realize that you will never be able to reconcile with your father. Then all of the Israelites who are supporting you will fight hard to make sure that you defeat him." **22** So they set up a tent for Absalom on the roof of the palace. Then Absalom had sexual relations in the tent with each of his father's secondary wives, one at a time. The Israelites in Jerusalem could see Absalom's officials bringing each secondary wife into the tent, and they could see Absalom going into the tent afterwards to have sexual relations with each one.

23 In those days, people did what Ahithophel recommended just as if God himself had recommended it. That was how David had regarded what Ahithophel recommended, and Absalom regarded it in that same way.

17 **1** Then Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Please allow me to pick 12,000 of our best soldiers so that I can lead them tonight to chase David. **2** When we catch up to him, he will be tired from traveling and physically weak. When our soldiers appear, this will terrify him. The other people who are with him will run away **and not fight against us**. We will only need to kill the king. **3** After that, the others who left Jerusalem with him will return to the city and accept you as their king. If we just kill the man you want to catch, that will be enough to get all the others to come back. It will not be necessary to hurt anyone else.” **4** Absalom and all the Israelite leaders who were with him thought that it would be good to do what Ahithophel had recommended.

5 But then Absalom said, “Ask Hushai to come and speak to us as well. We should find out whether he recommends anything different that we should consider.” **6** When Hushai arrived, Absalom told him what Ahithophel had suggested. Then he asked Hushai, “What do you think we should do? If you do not think that we should do what Ahithophel advises, then tell us what you think we should do instead.”

7 Hushai replied, “This time, what Ahithophel has suggested is not good advice.” **8** He continued, “You know that your father and the men who are with him are elite soldiers. You know that they must be very angry, like a wild mother bear whose cubs someone has stolen from her. Furthermore, your father has fought in many battles**, so he knows what he should do now**. He will not spend the night with the crowd of people who left Jerusalem with him. **9** Right now he is probably already hiding in a cave or in some other safe place. If Ahithophel leads soldiers out to attack David’s soldiers, David’s soldiers will certainly kill some of them at the start of the battle. When people hear about that, they will say, ‘David’s soldiers are slaughtering Absalom’s soldiers!’ **10** Then your other soldiers, even if they are as fierce as lions, will become very afraid. After all, everyone in Israel knows that your father is a great soldier and that the soldiers who are with him are very brave.

11 So this is what I recommend. You should really summon the entire Israelite army. Have the solders come here even if they live as far away as Dan **in the far north** or Beersheba **in the far south**. You will have too many soldiers to count, like the grains of sand on the seashore. **Wait until they come, and then** you yourself should lead the army into battle. **12** We will find your father, wherever he is, and our great army will overwhelm his smaller army, just as dew

covers the entire ground. Neither he nor any of the soldiers who are with him will survive.
13 If he decides to retreat into some city, all our soldiers will bring ropes to that city and pull it
down into the valley below. As a result, not one stone will remain on top of the hill where that
city was!"

14 Absalom and the other Israelite leaders who were with him decided, "What Hushai
suggests is better than what Ahithophel suggested." Yahweh led them not to accept
Ahithophel's advice, which actually would have been better for Absalom. As a result, Yahweh
caused a great defeat for Absalom.

15 Then Hushai went secretly and told the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, what both he
and Ahithophel had suggested to Absalom and the Israelite leaders. 16 Then he said to them,
"There is still a risk that Absalom might decide to do what Ahithophel suggested, so send a
message quickly to David. Tell him not to stay overnight at the place where people can walk
across the Jordan River. Instead, he and his soldiers must cross the Jordan River immediately.
Otherwise, Absalom and his army may come and kill them."

17 The priests' two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, were staying near En Rogel, outside
Jerusalem. They did not dare to enter the city, because if someone saw them, he would report it to
Absalom. Instead, they had arranged for a woman who served the two priests to come and
report to them what was happening. They would then go and report it to King David. 18 But a
young man saw them at En Rogel, and he went and reported this to Absalom. They knew the
young man had recognized them, so both of them left quickly and went to the house of a man
who lived in the city of Bahurim. That man had a well in his courtyard, and he let Jonathan and
Ahimaaz go down into the well to hide. 19 The man's wife took a cloth and covered the
opening of the well. Then she scattered grain on top of it to make it look as if this was the place
where she dried the grain in the sun. As a result, it was not evident that there was a well beneath
the cloth.

20 Some of Absalom's soldiers learned in what direction the two men had gone. So they
went in that direction and came to the house where they were hiding. They asked the wife,
"Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" She replied, "They went across that stream over there."
So the soldiers went in that direction and searched for them. But they could not find them, so
they went back to Jerusalem.

21 After the soldiers had gone, the two men came out of the well and went and reported to King David. They told him, “Ahithophel has encouraged Absalom to attack you immediately. So you must get all these people across the Jordan River quickly!” **22** So David and all his soldiers quickly started to cross the Jordan River, and by the next morning they had all crossed to the other side.

23 When Ahithophel realized that Absalom was not going to do what he had recommended, **he knew that David would defeat Absalom, so** he put a saddle on his donkey and returned home to his own city. He gave to his family instructions about what to do with his possessions, and then he hanged himself **because he knew that otherwise David would kill him as a traitor**. People buried his body in the same tomb where people had buried his father.

24 David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim. At the same time, Absalom and all his soldiers also crossed the Jordan River. **25** Now Absalom had appointed Amasa to be the commander of his army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of an Israelite man whose name was Ithra. Amasa’s mother was Abigail. She was the daughter of Nahash and the sister of Joab’s mother Zeruiah. **26** Absalom and his Israelite soldiers set up their military camp in the region of Gilead.

27 When David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from the Ammonite city of Rabbah, Machir son of Ammiel from the city of Lo Debar, and Barzillai from the city of Rogelim in Gilead came to them. **28** They brought mats for them to sleep on and bowls and clay pots that they could use to prepare and serve food. They also brought wheat and barley, as raw grains, as flour, and as roasted grains. They also brought beans and lentils, some raw and some roasted. **29** They also brought honey, curds, sheep, and cow’s cheese. They knew that David and his soldiers would need to have these things to eat because they would be hungry and thirsty and tired from marching through a desolate area.

18 **1** David organized his soldiers for the battle. He counted them and then appointed someone to lead each group of a hundred soldiers. He then appointed someone to lead each group of one thousand soldiers **that contained ten groups of a hundred soldiers**. **2** David then sent the soldiers out in three divisions. Joab commanded one division, Joab’s brother Abishai

commanded a second division, and Ittai from Gath commanded the third division. Before they left, David told the soldiers, “I will go with you personally into the battle.”

3 But his soldiers said, “No, we will not permit you to come into the battle with us. Even if they defeat us so that we all run away, they will not care about us. Or even if they kill half of us, they will not care about that either. There are ten thousand soldiers like us, **but only one king like you**. So it would be better for you to stay here inside the city of Mahanaim. You can receive reports of the battle and send soldiers to where we need them, and you can keep the city secure as a place to which we can retreat if we need to.”

4 The king replied to them, “Very well, I will do whatever seems best to you.” So he stood beside the city gate and observed while his soldiers marched out in their groups of hundreds and thousands.

5 As they were leaving, the king ordered Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, “For my sake, do not harm that young man Absalom!” All the soldiers heard David give this order about Absalom to his three main commanders.

6 So David’s soldiers went out to fight against the Israelite soldiers who were supporting Absalom. They fought a battle in the Forest of Ephraim. 7 David’s soldiers won the battle there against Absalom’s soldiers. They badly defeated them that day. They killed 20,000 of them. 8 The battle broke up into small skirmishes all over that area. The number of Absalom’s soldiers who died that day because of accidents in the forest was greater than the number of them whom David’s soldiers killed in the battle.

9 In the forest, Absalom suddenly noticed that some of David’s soldiers were near him. Absalom was riding on the mule **that the Israelite king rode. To get away from David’s soldiers, he made the mule run away, and** the mule ran under the thick branches of a large oak tree. Absalom’s head got caught in the branches. The mule he was riding kept going, and that left Absalom dangling in the air.

10 One of David’s soldiers saw what happened. He went and told Joab, “Listen, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree!”

11 Joab said to the man, “Listen, when you saw him hanging there, you should have killed
him immediately! If you had killed him, I would have rewarded you with ten pieces of silver
and a soldier’s belt!”

12 The man replied to Joab, “Even if you gave me a thousand pieces of silver, I would not
do anything to harm the king’s son. I say this because we all heard the king command you and
Abishai and Ittai, ‘For my sake, keep any soldier from hurting that young man Absalom!’ **13** If
I had killed Absalom, I would have put my own life in danger. **The king would have heard about
it, since** the king hears about everything. You would not have protected me by saying I was
obeying your orders**, and the king would have executed me**.”

14 Joab said, “I am not going to stay here and speak with you any longer!” Then he got
three spears and went to where Absalom was. Absalom was still alive, dangling from the
branches of the oak tree. Joab thrust the spears into Absalom’s chest. **15** Then ten young men
who carried Joab’s weapons gathered around Absalom, and they stabbed him repeatedly to
finish killing him.

16 Then Joab blew on his ram’s horn to signal to his soldiers that they should stop fighting.
So his soldiers stopped chasing Absalom’s soldiers and came back **to their camp**. **17** They took
Absalom’s body and threw it into a huge pit in the forest. They covered it with a huge pile of
stones. Meanwhile, all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been supporting Absalom ran
away back to their own homes.

18 (Absalom had no sons to preserve his family name **because his sons had died while they
were still young**. So while Absalom was alive, he had built a monument in the Valley of Kings
near Jerusalem. He thought that if he did that, people would remember him. He named the
monument after himself, and people still call it Absalom’s Monument.)

19 Ahimaaz son of Zadok said to Joab, “Allow me to run to King David and tell him the
good news. I want to do this because Yahweh has shown that he wants David to remain as
king, because he enabled his soldiers to defeat his enemies!”

20 But Joab said to him, “No, I will not allow you to run and tell this news to the king
today. Some other day you may do that, but not today. I do not want you to bring to the king
the news that his son is dead.”

21 Then Joab said to the man from Ethiopia who ran carrying messages for him, “You go and tell the king what you have seen.” So that man bowed respectfully to Joab **to show that he would obey** and started to run.

22 Then Ahimaaz said again to Joab, “However the king might respond to the news, even though your servant from Ethiopia has already left, please allow me to run too.” Joab replied, “My boy, you should not want to do that! You will not receive any reward for your news!”

23 But Ahimaaz replied, “However the king might respond to the news, I want to go.” So Joab said, “Very well, then, go.” Ahimaaz ran on the flat ground through which the Jordan River flows and arrived where David was before the man from Ethiopia did **because he had run through hills and forests**.

24 David was sitting in the area between the inner and outer gate in the city wall. A watchman went up on top of the city wall and stood on the roof over the gates. As he was looking around, he suddenly noticed a lone runner. **25** The watchman called down and reported this to King David. David said, “If he is alone, that indicates that he is coming to tell us news.” The man who was running continued to come closer.

26 Then the watchman saw another man running. So he called down to those below, “I see another man running alone!” And King David said, “He is also coming to tell us some news.”

27 The watchman said, “The first man seems to be Ahimaaz son of Zadok. He is running the way Ahimaaz runs.” The king said, “He must be coming to tell us good news, because Joab would not have sent someone like him to tell us bad news.”

28 When Ahimaaz got close enough, he called out to King David, “All is well!” When he arrived, he knelt down in front of him with his face on the ground to show respect. Then he said, “Your Majesty, praise Yahweh your God, who made your soldiers defeat the men who were rebelling against you!”

29 King David asked, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” Ahimaaz **did not want to answer that question, so he** replied, “When Joab sent the man from Ethiopia and me to bring news to you, I saw that there was a lot of confusion, but I do not know what it was about.”

30 So the king said, “Stand over there and wait.” So Ahimaaz stepped aside and stood nearby.

31 Then the man from Ethiopia arrived. He said, “Your Majesty, I have some good news to share with you. Here it is. Today Yahweh has shown that he wants you to remain as king, because he has enabled your soldiers to defeat the enemies who rebelled against you!”

32 The king said to him, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The man from Ethiopia replied, “Sir, I wish that what happened to him would happen to all of your enemies and to anyone who violently rebels against you!”

33 Realizing that he meant that Absalom was dead, David became extremely distressed. He went up to the room above the gateway and cried. As he was going up, he kept crying out, “O, my son Absalom! O, my dear son Absalom, I wish that I had died instead of you, Absalom, my dear son!”

19 1 Someone told Joab that the king was crying because he was so sad that Absalom had died. 2 All of David’s soldiers heard that he was unhappy that their army had killed Absalom. So even though they had won the battle against Absalom’s soldiers, they could not celebrate that day. 3 The soldiers came back into the city quietly that day, the way soldiers do so that no one will find out that they have run away from a battle. 4 The king covered his face with part of his cloak, and he kept crying loudly, “O, my son Absalom! Absalom, my dear son!”

5 Joab went to the house where the king was and told him, “Today your soldiers saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and wives and secondary wives. But you are making them feel shame for what they did! 6 You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who love you! It is as if you have said that you do not care about your own commanders and your soldiers. I can see that if Absalom were still alive and all of us were dead today, you would like that better. 7 So now you must go out and thank your soldiers for what they did. I swear by Yahweh that if you do not do that, they will all have abandoned you by tomorrow morning. Then you will be in more trouble than you have already had in your entire life!”

8 So the king went and sat at the city gate. People told the soldiers, “Look, the king is sitting at the gate!” So the soldiers came and gathered around him, and he thanked them.

Meanwhile, all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been supporting Absalom had run away back to their own homes.

9 Then people throughout the territory of Israel began to argue with each other about what they should do. Some of them said, "King David led our armies to defeat the Philistines and the other enemies who were oppressing us. But then he left Israel in order to escape from Absalom! **10** We appointed Absalom to be our king, but he died in the battle against David's soldiers. So we should do something to bring King David back!"

11 **King David learned what the people were saying,** so he sent the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to say to the leaders of Judah, "The king says that he has heard that the Israelite people want him to be king again. He says that you should not be the last ones to bring him back to his palace. **12** He says that you are his relatives. You and he have the same ancestor. So you should not be the last ones to bring him back!" **13** He also told them to say to Amasa, "You are one of my relatives. I swear that I am going to make you my army commander from now on instead of Joab. If I do not do that, then may God not make me the king again."

14 After David sent that message to them, the people of Judah agreed that he should be their king again. So they sent him a message that said, "We would like you and all your officials to come back." **15** So King David and his officials started back toward Jerusalem. When they arrived at **the eastern shore of** Jordan River, the leaders of the tribe of Judah met them. They had come to Gilgal **on the western shore** to escort the king and his officials across the river.

16 Shimei son of Gera, that man from the tribe of Benjamin who lived in Bahurim, hurried to the river with the leaders of Judah to meet King David. **17** There were 1,000 men from the tribe of Benjamin who came with him. Ziba, the servant of Saul, also hurried to the Jordan River. He brought his 15 sons and 20 servants with him. Shimei and Ziba quickly waded across the river to meet King David **on the eastern shore**. **18** The elders of Judah then crossed the river at the place where people could walk across it so that they could escort King David and his officials back to the other side. They wanted to do whatever the king wanted. Shimei came and bowed down in front of David.

19 He said to the king, "Your Majesty, please forgive me for the terrible thing that I did on the day that you left Jerusalem. I hope that you will not punish me for it, and I hope that you

will not continue to feel hostile toward me. **20** I acknowledge that I have sinned against you. But please consider that I have been first one from the northern tribes to come here today to welcome you back, Your Majesty."

21 But Abishai son of Zeruiah, told David, "Shimei cursed you, the man whom Yahweh appointed to be the king of Israel! So you should not forgive him. You should execute him for doing that!"

22 But David said, "I do not agree at all with what you two sons of Zeruiah want me to do. You are encouraging me to do something now that would not be good for me. I am not going to execute anyone in Israel today. I know confidently that the Israelites want me to be their king, **so I do not need to execute this man to make my reign more secure**." **23** Then King David told Shimei, "I promise that I will not execute you," and he swore an oath that he would not execute him.

24 Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also came to the Jordan River to welcome King David back. **To show his grief,** Mephibosheth had not cut his toenails or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the time that the king left Jerusalem up to the time when he returned safely. **25** When he arrived from Jerusalem to welcome King David, he said to him, "Mephibosheth, why did you not go with me?"

26 He replied, "Your Majesty, **when I heard that you were leaving Jerusalem,** I told my servant Ziba, 'Saddle my donkey so that I can ride on it and go with the king.' But he deceived me **and left without me. I could not follow him,** because I am crippled. **27** He lied to you about me. But your Majesty, you are as wise as one of God's angels. So do whatever seems right to you. **28** I consider that all of my grandfather's family expected that you would execute us. But instead, you allowed me to eat my meals with your household! So I certainly do not have the right to ask you for anything further."

29 King David replied, "You do not need to say anything more. I have decided that you and Ziba will equally divide the land **that belonged to your grandfather Saul**."

30 Mephibosheth replied to the king, "Your Majesty, Ziba may have all of the land. All that matters to me is that you have returned safely."

31 Barzillai the Gileadite had come down to the Jordan River from his home in Rogelim to escort the king across the river. **32** By this time Barzillai was elderly. He was 80 years old. But he was such a wealthy man that he had been able to provide all of the food that the king and his soldiers needed while they were at Mahanaim. **33** The king said to Barzillai, "Come across the Jordan River with me to Jerusalem, and I will take care of you there."

34 But Barzillai replied, "I do not have many more years to live. So there is no reason for me to go with you to Jerusalem. **35** I am now 80 years old. I do not know what is enjoyable and what is not enjoyable. I cannot enjoy what I eat and what I drink. I cannot hear anymore the voices of men and women as they sing. You would have to make difficult arrangements for me. I do not want you to have to do that. **36** I will cross the Jordan River with you and walk a short distance with you toward Jerusalem. But you do not need to entertain me there in your royal court. **37** Instead, please allow me to return to my home. That is where I want to die, near my parents' grave **so people can bury me there**. But here is my son Chimham. Your Majesty, please allow him to go with you and serve you, and do for him whatever seems right to you."

38 The king replied, "Very well, Chimham may cross the river with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you. And I will also do for you whatever you want me to do."

39 Then the leaders of Judah and the people who had been with David honored him by leading the way across the Jordan River. David followed them across. He kissed Barzillai **on the cheek to show his affection and gratitude** and asked God to do good things for him. Then Barzillai returned to his home.

40 But Chimham stayed with King David as he continued on to Gilgal. Now the leaders of the tribe of Judah had escorted David across the Jordan River. But only some of the leaders of the other tribes arrived in time to do that with them**, since the leaders of Judah did not wait for them**.

41 Then, when the rest of the Israelite leaders arrived, they complained to David, "It was not fair for our fellow Israelites, those leaders from the tribe of Judah, to take you away from us! We all wanted to escort you and your family and your soldiers across the Jordan River. But they did that without waiting for us!"

42 The leaders from Judah told the leaders of the other tribes, “We escorted the king because he is from our tribe of Judah. You should not be angry about this. The king never paid for our food, and he never gave us any gifts.”

43 The men of the other Israelite tribes replied, “We represent ten of the tribes that the Israelite king rules, and you represent only one. So you should not have treated us with disrespect by bringing the king back across the Jordan River without us. We were the first ones to talk about bringing David back to Jerusalem to be our king again.” But the leaders of Judah angrily disagreed with the leaders of the other tribes of Israel.

20 1 There was a man there at Gilgal whose name was Sheba. He was the son of Bichri. He was a man who often caused trouble. He came from the tribe of Benjamin. He blew a ram’s horn and called out, “David, that son of Jesse, does not belong to us at all! So, my fellow Israelites, let us return to our homes!”

2 Then the leaders of the Israelite tribes decided not to escort David back to Jerusalem. Instead, they did what Sheba had said and returned to their homes. But the leaders of the tribe of Judah remained with David. They still wanted him to be their king. So they escorted him from near the Jordan River back to the city of Jerusalem.

3 When David arrived at the palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten secondary wives whom he had left there to take care of the palace and put them in another residence where someone guarded them. David provided what they needed, but he never had sexual relations with them again. It was as if they were widows, even though their husband was still alive. They had to stay in that residence until they died.

4 Then King David told Amasa, “Summon the soldiers of the tribe of Judah to come here by the day after tomorrow. You must be here also, ready to lead them into battle.” 5 So Amasa went to summon the Judean soldiers. But he did not return within the time that David had specified.

6 Then David told Abishai, “If we do not capture him quickly, Sheba son of Bichri will hurt us even more than Absalom did. So I want you to take the soldiers who are already here with me and go to capture him. If you do not do that, we will no longer know where he is going. That would allow him and his soldiers to go into cities that have walls and then it would be

difficult to defeat them.” 7 So Abishai led those soldiers out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba.
They included Joab’s personal guard, the king’s elite bodyguards, and the men who had been
David’s army when he was in Gath.

8 When they arrived at the large rock that is in the region of Gibeah, Amasa met them, leading a large army of Judean soldiers. Joab was wearing armor for battle, and he had fastened a short sword in its sheath to his belt. He approached Amasa, and as he did, he made the sword fall out of its sheath into his hand.

9 Joab said to Amasa, “Hello, cousin! Are you doing well?” Then Joab grabbed Amasa’s beard with his right hand so that he could kiss him on the cheek as a friendly greeting. 10 Amasa did not think that Joab would hurt him with the sword he was holding in his hand. But Joab thrust it into Amasa’s belly, and his insides spilled out onto the ground. Amasa eventually died from this wound. Joab did not stab him again. Then Joab and his brother Abishai and the soldiers they were leading left and continued to pursue Sheba.

11 One of the young men who carried Joab’s weapons stayed next to Amasa’s body. He called out to the Judean soldiers, “Everyone who wants Joab to be our commander and who wants David to be our king, go with Joab to capture Sheba!” 12 Amasa had fallen onto the road, and he was rocking back and forth and bleeding severely as he lay slowly dying. Joab’s soldier saw that the Judean soldiers were all stopping when they came to where Amasa was. So he dragged him off the road into a field and threw a cloth over him. 13 After that soldier took Amasa’s body off the road, the other soldiers continued on and went with Joab to pursue Sheba.

14 Sheba fled north through the whole length of the territory of Israel and finally came to the city of Abel Beth Maacah. The soldiers of the Berites had formed their army and had also come north with Sheba as their commander. 15 Joab and the soldiers he was commanding found out that Sheba had gone there, so they went there and surrounded the city. They built a dirt ramp up against the outer wall of the city. Then they started battering the wall to try to make it collapse. 16 But a wise woman who lived in that city stood on the top of the wall and shouted, “Listen to me! Please ask Joab to come here, because I want to talk to him!” 17 So they told Joab and he came there, and the woman asked, “Are you Joab?” He replied, “Yes, I am.” She said to him, “Please listen to what I say.” He replied, “I am listening.”

18 She said, “For a long time people have said, ‘When people have problems, they ought
to ask the people who live in the city of Abel what they should do.’ By getting good advice
here, they have solved their problems. 19 We who live in this city are peaceful and loyal
Israelites. But you are trying to destroy our city. Many towns and villages in this area depend
on us. You should not be trying to destroy a community that belongs to Yahweh!”

20 Joab replied, “I certainly do not want to destroy your city at all! 21 That is not what we
want to do. But Sheba son of Bichri, a man from the hilly area where the people of the tribe of
Ephraim live, is rebelling against King David. If you surrender only him to us, then we will go
away from this city.” The woman replied to Joab, “We agree. We will cut off his head and
throw it over the wall to you.”

22 Then this woman went to the leaders of the city and told them what she had said to
Joab. **They agreed, and** they cut off Sheba’s head and threw it over the wall to Joab. Then Joab
blew his ram’s horn **to signal that his soldiers should stop fighting**. They left that city and
returned to their homes. Joab returned to Jerusalem and told King David what had happened.

23 **After David became king again,** Joab was the commander of the entire Israelite army.
Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David’s elite corps of bodyguards.
24 Adoniram supervised the men whom the king forced to work for him. Jehoshaphat son of
Ahilud was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided. 25 Sheva was
the official secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests. 26 And Ira from the city of Jair was
David’s advisor.

21 1 During the time when David ruled, there was a famine in Israel continuously for
three years. David asked Yahweh why this was happening. Yahweh told him, “**There is a famine
to show that** you need to punish Saul’s family because Saul killed so many people from the
Gibeonite group.”

2 So the king asked the leaders of Gibeon to come and speak with him. (The people of
Gibeon were not Israelites. They were instead an Amorite people group that had survived **when
the Israelites invaded the land of Canaan and killed the rest of the Amorites**. The Israelites had
solemnly promised that they would not kill them. But Saul had tried to kill all of them because
he eagerly wanted the people of Israel and Judah to be the only ones living in that land.)

3 David said to the Gibeonite leaders, “What can I do to make up for what Saul did to your
people so that you would then ask Yahweh to do good things for us Israelites again?”

4 They replied, “You cannot make up for what Saul did to us by having his family pay us
any amount of money. And we do not have the right to kill any Israelites.” So David asked, “So
what are you asking me to do for you?”

5 They replied, “That man Saul wanted to destroy us so that none of us would live
anywhere in Israel. And he killed many of us. 6 Give us seven of Saul’s descendants **and allow
us to execute them**. We will **kill them and** hang up their bodies in public so that Yahweh can see
that we have punished Saul’s family for what he did. We will do this in the city of Gibeah
where Saul lived. Yahweh chose him to be the king of Israel **and he should have protected us**.”
The king replied, “Very well, I will give them to you **so that you can execute them**.”

7 The king did not give Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth to them. He was Jonathan’s son,
and David and Jonathan had made a solemn promise that they would never harm each other’s
descendants. They had sworn by Yahweh that they would keep that promise. 8 Instead, he took
two sons whom Rizpah daughter of Aiah, had borne to Saul **as his secondary wife**. Their names
were Armoni and Mephibosheth. David also took five of the sons of Merab, Saul’s daughter.
Merab’s husband was Adriel son of Barzillai. He was from the city of Meholah. 9 David gave
these men to the people of Gibeon **to execute**. They took those seven men to Gibeon and killed
them and hanged their bodies up on the hill in that city. That was where people worshiped
Yahweh and considered him to be present. The Gibeonites killed those seven men at the same
time. Those men died at the beginning of the time of year when people harvest their grain,
beginning with barley.

10 Then Rizpah took some rough cloth and hung it from a rock **near the bodies** so she could
sit under it and have shade from the sun. She stayed there from the time that people started to
harvest barley until the autumn rains began. She did not allow any birds to come near the
corpses during the day, and she did not allow any wild animals to come near them during the
night. 11 Someone told David what Rizpah daughter of Aiah, Saul’s secondary wife, had done.
12 So he went **with some of his servants** to Jabesh Gilead, where the leaders of that city allowed
him to take the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. The soldiers from that city had gone
stealthily at night and taken their bones from the plaza in the city of Beth Shan. That was

where Philistine soldiers had hung them on the day when they had killed Saul **and Jonathan** on Mount Gilboa. **13** David **and his servants** took the bones of Saul and Jonathan. Some other servants also took the bones of the seven men whom the Gibeonites had hanged.

14 David's servants went to the tomb of Saul's father Kish, in the city of Zela in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. There they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan **and the bones of the men whom the Gibeonites had hanged**. In this way, they did all that the king had commanded them to do. After the Gibeonites punished Saul's family for what he had done, God answered the Israelites' prayers for their land **and caused the famine to end**.

15 Later the Philistine army began to fight again against the army of Israel. David went with his soldiers to fight them. During the battle, David became tired. **16** One of the Philistine soldiers in the battle was a man whose name was Ishbi Benob. He was a giant as his ancestors had been. He carried a bronze spear that weighed almost three and a half kilograms. He also had a dangerous weapon. It seemed to him that he was going to be able to kill David. **17** But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to help David. He attacked the giant and killed him. Then David's soldiers made David promise that he would not go with them into a battle again. They said that if enemy soldiers killed him in battle, Israel would no longer have him as king to guide them.

18 Later, the Israelite soldiers fought another battle with the Philistines. This happened near Gob. During the battle, Sibbecai, from the clan of Hushah, killed Saph, who was a giant as his ancestors had been.

19 Later, the Israelite soldiers fought another battle with the Philistines near Gob. During that battle, Elhanan son of Jaare Oregim from Bethlehem killed Goliath from Gath. Goliath had a great spear whose shaft was very thick, like the bar on a weaver's loom.

20 Later, there was another battle near Gath. One of the Philistine soldiers was very tall. He had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He was a giant as his ancestors had been. **21** He challenged any Israelite soldier to fight him in single combat. David's older brother Shimeah had a son whose name was Jonathan. Jonathan accepted the challenge, fought this Philistine soldier, and killed him.

22 Those four men lived in Gath and were giants as their ancestors had been. David and his soldiers fought them and killed them.

22 **1** After Yahweh had rescued David from Saul and his other enemies, David sang a song to Yahweh. **2** This is what he sang: “Yahweh, you are like a huge rock or fortress **where I can go to be safe**. I can be confident that you will rescue me when I am in trouble. **3** Yahweh, you protect me. I am as safe as I would be if I were hiding on top of a cliff. It is as if you are a shield that defends me. You are the powerful God who saves me. You are like a high place where I find refuge. You save me from those who act violently toward me. **4** You deserve for people to praise you, Yahweh. When I cry to you **for help**, you rescue me from my enemies. **5** **Someone was trying to kill me, and** I was in such danger of dying that it was as if a huge wave was crashing over me. His wicked plans against me were like floodwaters that were carrying me away, and this made me very afraid. **6** I did not think I could escape going to the place where dead people go. It was as if that place had wrapped ropes around me and was pulling me down into it. It was as if the only direction I could walk was right into a trap where I would surely die. **7** But when I was very distressed, I cried out to you, Yahweh my God. From your temple in heaven you could hear me calling, and you listened to my prayer. **8** It made you so angry **that someone was trying to kill me, and you responded so powerfully,** that it was as if there was a great earthquake. It seemed as if the sky itself was shaking. **9** **Your power was so great that** it was as if there was a volcano from which smoke was rising, a stream of fire was flowing out that burned up everything in its path, and hot coals were flying into the air that started fires where they landed. **10** **Your power was so great** when you came **to help me that** it was as if there was a great thunderstorm, with only a little sky visible below the low-hanging dark clouds. **11** **You came very fast to help me, as if** you were riding on a creature that had wings. It was as if the strong winds **of a thunderstorm** were a bird that you were riding. **12** It was as if you had made the darkness of the storm a safe place for you to stay. Yes, it was as if you had a temporary shelter within the clouds that were full of water. **13** It was as if it became bright where you were within the clouds, and then lightning bolts came from there. **14** It was as if there was a loud sound of thunder in the sky because you, Yahweh, the God who is greater than all other gods, had spoken **to announce that you were coming to rescue me**. **15** It was as if you sent flashes of lightning that made my enemies so afraid that they ran away in different directions, as if you had shot arrows at them. **16** Then it was as if you shouted at my enemies **to tell them to stop trying to kill me**. It was as if you blew away all the water that was covering the bottom of the ocean and all the ground that was over the deepest part of the earth. **17** It was

as if you reached down from heaven and grabbed me so that you could pull me up out of the deep water of the ocean. **18** There was a powerful man who wanted to harm me, and there were people who hated me. They were too strong for me to defeat, but you rescued me from them. **19** They attacked me, and they would have destroyed me, but you, Yahweh, protected me. **20** You brought me to a place where I was safe. You love me, and so you rescued me. **21** Yahweh, you did good things for me because I did what was right. I did not harm my enemies, so you made sure that they did not harm me. **22** Yahweh, I have lived as you want people to live. I have not stopped obeying you, my God, and done wicked things instead. **23** I have remained aware of what you have said people should do, and I have continued to obey all your laws. **24** I have not done anything for which you would blame me. I have been careful not to do anything for which you would punish me. **25** You have done good things for me because I did what is right. You recognize that I am innocent. **26** When people are loyal to you, you act loyally toward them. When people are careful to do good things for others, you do good things for them. **27** You allow sincere people to recognize how sincere you are. But when people try to trick others, you show that you are much more clever than they are. **28** You rescue people whom others are afflicting. You are aware of people who are arrogant, and you humiliate them. **29** Yahweh, you are like a lamp that shines light so that I can see even when it is dark. **30** With your help I have caught and defeated a band of raiders. With your help I have captured a city that had walls around it, as if I had leaped over those walls. **31** My God, everything that you do is perfect. Everything that you say is right. You protect everyone who depends on you, as if you are a shield that defends them. **32** Yahweh, you are the only real God. Only you are like a huge rock **where I can go to be safe**. **33** My God, you are like a very secure place where I can go to hide from danger. You make sure that nothing prevents me from doing what you want me to do. **34** You enable me to walk about safely in the mountains, as a deer does, without falling. **35** You teach me how to fight in a battle. You give me the strength to bend **and string** a bronze bow. **36** You have saved me by protecting me like a shield, and by answering my prayers, you have enabled me to defeat my enemies. **37** You have given me many ways to respond to each situation. As a result, I have been able to carry out my plans successfully. **38** I chased my enemies and defeated them. I did not stop fighting them until I had killed them all. **39** I defeated them so completely that they had no army left. The ones who fell to the ground never

got up, because they died of their wounds. **40** You have given me the strength and courage to fight battles. When people revolted against me, you enabled me to subdue them. **41** You enabled me to defeat my enemies and step in triumph on their necks. You gave me power over those who hated me so that I was able to destroy them. **42** They looked for someone to rescue them, but no one did. They cried out **for help** to you, Yahweh, but you did not help them. **43** I defeated them so completely that they were no longer any threat to me, no more than tiny particles of dust would be. It was as if I had flattened them smoothly on the ground like the mud on the streets. **44** You rescued me from the Israelites who tried to rebel against me. You preserved me as the ruler of many nations. Foreign people are now my subjects. **45** Foreign rulers fearfully bow down in front of me **to show their submission**. When they heard about what Yahweh enabled me to do, they obeyed me. **46** I defeat foreign armies that resist me so that they become weak, like a plant that dries up in the sun. They surrender and come out of their cities with walls shaking with weakness and fear. **47** Yahweh, you are the only real God! I praise you! You are like a huge rock **where I can go to be safe**! You are the powerful God who rescues me. Everyone should exalt you. **48** You are the God who enables me to conquer enemies who have attacked me. You cause the people of other nations to be subject to my rule. **49** You kept my enemies from capturing me. People rebelled against me, but it as if their armies had been floodwaters and you lifted me out of them to safety. You rescued me from men who tried to harm me. **50** Because of all this, I thank you, Yahweh, so that all people groups will know that you are the one who has helped me. I sing to praise you for what you have done that has made you famous. **51** You chose me to be king, and you have done great things to save me from my enemies. You faithfully show kindness to me, David, whom you anointed as king, and you will always show kindness faithfully to my descendants."

23 **1** David son of Jesse was a man whom God caused to become great. The God whom the descendants of Jacob worship chose him to be the king of Israel. David wrote beautiful songs for the people of Israel. This is the last song that he wrote. **2** "The Spirit of Yahweh used me to say what he wanted to say. The message that I spoke came from him. **3** The God whom we Israelite people worship has spoken. The one who protects us Israelites said to me, 'Kings who rule fairly over people have great respect for me. **4** They are like the light that appears at dawn when the sun rises on a cloudless morning. The sunshine causes grass to sprout after the

rain ends.’ **5** And that is how God will surely bless my family, since he made a covenant with me that will last forever. He prepared that covenant carefully and guaranteed it. He will certainly act to help me and make the things happen that I truly want. **6** But God will remove all the people who disrespect him, just as people throw away thorns that hurt their hands when they try to pick them up. **7** Someone who wants to get rid of thornbushes does not grab them. Instead, he uses an iron shovel or a wooden stick to dig them out. Then he burns them right there.”

8 Here is a description of David’s greatest warriors. Three of them were the very greatest. Their leader was Josheb Basshebeth the Tahchemonite. He once He fought and killed -e -e 800 enemy soldiers in a single battle.

9 The next of David’s very greatest warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. The Philistine army invaded Israel, and the Israelite army came to fight them. The **Philistines were winning the battle, so the** other Israelite soldiers retreated. **10** But Eleazar fought even harder against the Philistine soldiers until he had almost no strength left. He had held his sword so hard for so long that his hand cramped and he could not let go of his sword. Yahweh won a great victory for the Israelites on that day. The other Israelite soldiers only came back to the battlefield to take the armor from the Philistines whom Eleazar had killed.

11 The next of David’s very greatest warriors was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. Once the Philistine army invaded Israel and came to the city of Lehi, where there was a field of ripe lentils **that they wanted to steal**. The other Israelite soldiers ran away from the Philistine troops. **12** But Shammah stood in the middle of the field. He fought and killed Philistine soldiers **so that they could not steal the lentils**. And so Yahweh won a great victory for the Israelites.

13 At the time when David was staying in the cave of Adullam, three other men who were among his 30 greatest warriors came to help him. It was summer. A group of Philistine soldiers had set up their tents in the Valley of the Raphaites. **14** David was staying in the cave **because it was safe there**, and another group of Philistine soldiers was occupying **his home town of** Bethlehem. **15** One day David felt very thirsty. He said, “If only someone would bring me some water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!” **16** So these three of his greatest warriors fought their way through the camp of Philistine soldiers at Bethlehem. They drew

some water from the well there and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground as an offering to Yahweh. **17** He said, "Yahweh, it would certainly not be right for me to drink this water! That would be like drinking the blood of these men who were willing to die to get it for me!" So he refused to drink it. That was one of the things that those three of his greatest warriors did.

18 Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's younger brother, was the leader of those three of David's greatest soldiers. He once fought against 300 enemy soldiers and killed them all. As a result, he became famous like the three very greatest soldiers. **19** He was the most famous of those three of David's greatest soldiers, and he became their leader, although the three very greatest warriors were even more famous.

20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada from the city of Kabzeel was another of David's greatest soldiers. He won many great victories. He killed two of the best warriors in the Moabite army in single combat. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion there. **21** He also killed a huge Egyptian soldier. That soldier had a spear as a weapon. Benaiah had only a thick wooden rod. But he attacked the soldier and pulled the spear out of his hand. Then he killed him with his own spear. **22** Those are some of the things that Benaiah son of Jehoiada did. As a result, he became famous as one of those three of David's greatest warriors. **23** He was more famous than David's other thirty greatest warriors, although the three very greatest warriors were even more famous. David appointed him to be the commander of his bodyguards. **24** These are the names of David's greatest warriors: Asahel the brother of Joab; Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem; **25** Shammah the Harodite; Elika the Harodite; **26** Helez the Paltite; Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; **27** Abiezer the Anathothite; Mebunnai the Hushathite; **28** Zalmon the Ahohite; Maharai the Netophathite; **29** Heleb son of Baanah the Netophathite; Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin; **30** Benaiah the Pirathonite; Hiddai from the place where streams flow through Gaash; **31** Abi Albon the Arbathite; Azmaveth the Barhumite; **32** Eliahba the Shaalbonite; Jonathan son of Jashen; **33** Shammah the Hararite; Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite; **34** Eliphelet son of Ahasbai son of the Maacathite; Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite; **35** Hezro the Carmelite; Paarai the Arbite; **36** Igal son of Nathan from Zobah; Bani the Gadite; **37** Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai

the Beerothite, who carried the weapons of Joab son of Zeruiah; **38** Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the Ithrite; **39** and Uriah the Hittite. Altogether, these were 37 of David's greatest warriors.

24 **1** Yahweh was angry with the Israelite people again, and he led David to do something that caused trouble for them. David caused that trouble by saying, "Find out how many soldiers Israel and Judah have."

2 King David said to Joab, the commander of his regular army, "I want you to go with your officers through the territories of all the tribes of Israel, from Dan **in the far north** to Beersheba **in the far south**, and count the men who can fight as soldiers. That way I will know how many Israelite men we have who can fight as soldiers in the army."

3 But Joab replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I hope that Yahweh our God will give us Israelites a hundred times more soldiers than we have now. I hope that you will see this happen **in your own lifetime**. But I do not think it is a good idea to count how many soldiers we have."

4 But King David insisted that Joab do as he had said, and he ordered the commanders of the army to do it. So they left his court and went out to count the Israelite men who could fight in war.

5 They crossed the Jordan River and set up their tents south of Aroer, in the middle of the valley. From there they went through the territory of the tribe of Gad, and from there they went **north** to Jazer. **6** Then they went **north** to Gilead and to the area of Tahtim Hodshi. Then they went to Dan Jaan **in the far north of Israel**, and then they went **farther west** to Sidon. **7** Then they went south to Tyre, a city that had high walls around it, and also to all the cities where some Hivites and Canaanites still lived. Then they went to Beersheba, in the desolate area in the southern part of the territory of Judah.

8 It took them nine months and 20 days to finish going throughout the land **and counting the people**. After that, they returned to Jerusalem.

9 They reported to King David the number of men that they had counted. There were 800,000 men in Israel and 500,000 men in Judah who were fit to serve as soldiers in the army.

10 But after David's officers had counted the fighting men of Israel, David felt very badly that he had told them to do that. He confessed to Yahweh, "When I ordered them to do that, I committed a very serious sin. Please forgive me. But now, Yahweh, I admit that what I did was very foolish."

11 When David got up the next morning, Yahweh gave a message to the prophet Gad. He was a man who helped David know what God wanted him to do. Gad said to David, **12** "Go and tell David that I say he must choose one of three punishments that I will describe. I will punish him with the one that he chooses."

13 So Gad went to David and told him that Yahweh had said he would need to choose one of three punishments. He then told David, "You can choose for there to be seven years of famine in Israel. You can choose for your enemies to keep defeating you so badly over the course of three months that your army keeps running away from them. Or you can choose for there to be a plague here in Israel for three days. I will go back and tell Yahweh your answer. So think carefully about what you will choose."

14 David said to Gad, "All those are very terrible things for me to choose between! But let Yahweh be the one to punish me **with a plague**, since he is very merciful. Do not let humans be the ones to punish me."

15 So Yahweh sent a plague on the Israelite people. It started that morning and continued for three days. Throughout the territory of Israel there were 70,000 Israelites who died because of the plague. **16** Then the angel who had killed all those people lifted his hand toward the city of Jerusalem in order to cause a plague that would kill many of the people who lived there. But Yahweh grieved about punishing any more people, and said to the angel "Put your hand back down **and do not cause a plague in Jerusalem**!" When Yahweh said that, his angel was standing near the place where Araunah the Jebusite threshed grain.

17 When David saw the angel who was causing the people to become sick and die, he spoke to Yahweh. He said, "Truly, I am the one who has committed the sin. I have done a very wicked thing, but these people are as innocent as sheep. They have certainly not done anything that is wrong. So you should punish me and my family, not these people!"

18 That day Gad came to David and told him, “Go to the place where Araunah the Jebusite
threshes grain and build an altar to worship Yahweh there.” **19** So David did what Gad told
him to do, which was what Yahweh had commanded, and he went there. **20** When Araunah
looked down and saw the king and his officials coming toward him, he came out of his house
and lay down on the ground in front of the king **to honor him**, with his face touching the
ground.

21 Araunah said, “Your Majesty, may I ask why you have come to me?” David replied, “I
have come to buy this ground where you thresh grain. That way I can build an altar here to
Yahweh **and offer sacrifices on it** so that he will stop the plague that has been killing so many
Israelites.”

22 Araunah replied to David, “Your Majesty, please offer to Yahweh whatever you wish.
You may take the oxen that you see here and use them for an offering that you burn completely
on the altar. And you may take their yokes and the boards that I use for the threshing, which
you also see here, and you may use them for the wood that you will burn. **23** Your Majesty, I,
Araunah, hereby give all these things to you.” Then he said, “I hope that Yahweh your God
will accept your offering and grant your request.”

24 But the king said to Araunah, “No, I will not accept these things as a gift. I will pay you
for them. I will not take things that have cost me nothing and burn them completely on an altar
as offerings to Yahweh.” So David paid 50 shekels of silver to Araunah for the oxen and the
ground.

25 Then David built an altar there to Yahweh. He burned the oxen completely on the altar
as an offering. He also offered fellowship sacrifices. Then Yahweh answered David’s prayers
for the people of his land, and he ended the plague that had been killing so many Israelites.

First Kings

1 **1** When King David was very old, even though his helpers put many blankets on top of him at night, he still felt cold. **2** So his officials said to him, “Your Majesty, please allow us to search for a young virgin who can stay with you and take care of you. She can sleep close to you and keep you warm.”

3 **The king gave them permission,** so they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman. They found a woman whose name was Abishag. She lived in the city of Shunem. They brought her to the king. **4** Abishag was very beautiful. She came to the royal court and took care of the king. **Even though she lay in bed with him to keep him warm,** the king did not have sexual relations with her. **5-6** After Absalom died, David’s oldest remaining son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. He was a very handsome man. For his whole life, his father David had not corrected him about the things he did. Adonijah started to boast. He told people, “Now **that Absalom has died,** I will be the next king.” He got a chariot to ride in and horses to pull it, and he had 50 men run in front of his chariot wherever he went.

7 One day Adonijah spoke with Joab, David’s army commander, and with Abiathar the priest, and they promised to help him become the next king. **8** But other important people refused to help him. These included Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David’s greatest soldiers.

9 One day Adonijah went to the stone of Zoheleth near En Rogel to sacrifice some sheep and oxen and fat cattle **for a feast**. He invited most of his brothers, King David’s other sons, to come. He also invited most of the king’s Judean officials to come **to the feast, where he planned to proclaim himself king**. **10** But he did not invite Nathan, Benaiah, the great soldiers, or his younger brother Solomon.

11 Nathan **found out what they were doing, so he went and** said to Solomon’s mother Bathsheba, “I must tell you that Adonijah son of Haggith is making himself the king! And King David does not know about this! **12** Please allow me to give you some advice about what

you can do to save your own life and your son Solomon's life, because otherwise Adonijah will kill you. 13 Go right away to King David. Say to him, 'Your Majesty, you solemnly promised me that my son Solomon would become the king after you die. You said that he would sit on your throne and rule. But instead, Adonijah has proclaimed himself king.' 14 Then, Bathsheba, while you are still talking to the king, I will come in and tell him that what you are saying to him about Adonijah is true."

15 So Bathsheba went to see the king in his bedroom. (He was very old, and Abishag, who was from the city of Shunem, was taking care of him.) 16 Bathsheba bowed very low in front of the king. Then the king asked her, "What do you want?"

17 She replied, "Your Majesty, you solemnly promised me, with Yahweh your God as your witness, that my son Solomon would become the king after you died. You promised that he would sit on your throne and rule. 18 But instead, Adonijah has made himself king without you knowing about it. 19 He has sacrificed many oxen and fat cattle and sheep, and he has invited most of your sons to the celebration. He has also invited Abiathar the priest and Joab, your army commander. But he has not invited your son Solomon. 20 Your Majesty, all the people of Israel are expecting you to tell them who will become the next king after you die. 21 If you do not confirm that you want Solomon to be king, then after you have died, people will treat me and Solomon my son as rebels, and they will execute us because we did not help Adonijah become king."

22 While Bathsheba was still talking with King David, the prophet Nathan arrived at the palace. 23 David's servants told him, "Nathan the prophet has come." David told his servants to bring Nathan in, so Bathsheba left, and Nathan came to where the king was. He knelt down and touched the ground with his face to show great respect.

24 Then Nathan said, "Your Majesty, I do not recall you saying that Adonijah would become king after you. 25 I ask about this because today he has gone to En Rogel and has sacrificed many oxen, fat cattle, and sheep. He has invited all of your other sons, Joab the army commander, and Abiathar the priest. They are all having a feast with him and telling him, 'We hope that you, King Adonijah, will reign for a long time!' 26 But he did not invite me or Zadok the priest or Benaiah son of Jehoiada or your son Solomon. 27 It does not seem to me that you

would have given Adonijah permission to hold this feast without telling me and your other officials that you wanted him to become the king after you died."

28 Then King David said, "Tell Bathsheba to come back here again." So **Nathan left, and someone got Bathsheba and** she came back and stood in front of the king.

29 King David told her, "I am going to make you a solemn promise. I guarantee it by my devotion to Yahweh, who has saved me from all my troubles. **30** I promised you that your son Solomon would become the king after I died. I promised that he would sit on my throne and rule instead of me. I guaranteed that promise by my devotion to Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship. Now I am promising that I will make Solomon the king this very day."

31 Bathsheba knelt down and touched her face to the ground **to show gratitude and respect** and said, "Your Majesty, I hope that you will continue to reign for a long time!"

32 Then King David ordered some of his servants, "Go and tell Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada to come here to me." **So servants went and got them, and** when they came in, **33** David told them, "Put my son Solomon on the special mule that I ride as king. Gather my royal bodyguards and have them escort him to the spring at Gihon. **34** There the two of you, Zadok and Nathan, must pour olive oil on his head to appoint him as the next king of Israel. Have someone blow a ram's horn, and have all the people there shout, 'We hope that King Solomon will reign for a long time!' **35** Then have him ride on the mule ahead of you as you return here. Solomon should come to the palace and sit on my throne. He will then be the king instead of me. He is the one I have chosen to rule over all the people of Israel and of Judah."

36 Benaiah son of Jehoiada replied, "We will do that! We know that Yahweh, the God whom you worship faithfully, wants Solomon to be the next king! **37** Your Majesty, Yahweh has helped you. We hope that he will also help Solomon and enable him to become an even greater king than you have been."

38 So Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and the elite corps of royal bodyguards put Solomon on King David's special mule and escorted him to the spring at Gihon. **39** There Zadok took the container of olive oil that he had brought from the sacred tent and poured the oil on Solomon's head to show that he would be the next king. Then someone blew a ram's horn, and all the

people who had gathered for the ceremony shouted, “We hope that King Solomon will reign for a long time!” **40** Then all those people followed Solomon back to Jerusalem. They were playing flutes and shouting joyfully. They were making a very loud noise that echoed off the ground.

41 As Adonijah and all his guests were finishing eating at their celebration, they heard the noise. When Joab heard someone blowing a ram’s horn, he asked, “Why is there so much noise in the city?”

42 While he was still speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest, arrived. Adonijah told him, “Come in! You are the kind of important person that someone would have sent to bring me good news!”

43 Jonathan replied, “No, the truth is that His Majesty King David has just made Solomon the next king. **44** David sent Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and his elite corps of royal bodyguards to go with Solomon. They put Solomon on the special mule that David rides as king. **45** They all went to the spring at Gihon, and there Zadok and Nathan poured olive oil on his head to show that he would be the next king. Then they returned from there to the city, celebrating the whole way. Many people in the city are celebrating with them. That is why you are hearing this loud noise. **46** Right now, Solomon is sitting on the throne where the Israelite king sits. **47** Furthermore, the palace officials came to His Majesty King David and thanked him **for appointing Solomon as the king**. They said, ‘We want God to make Solomon even more famous than you have been. We want God to enable him to be an even better king than you have been.’ When they said that, the king, lying on his bed, bowed his head to worship Yahweh **and show that he agreed with what they had said**. **48** Then King David said, ‘I praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, because he has allowed one of my sons to become the king today while I am still alive to hear about it.’”

49 This report made all of Adonijah’s guests very afraid. They all got up immediately and left. The group scattered in different directions. **50** Adonijah was afraid of what Solomon would do to him. So he went to the sacred tent and held onto the projections at the corners of the altar **because Israelites could do that so no one would harm them**. **51** Then someone told Solomon, “Listen, Adonijah is afraid of you, so he has gone to the sacred tent and is holding

onto the altar. He is saying, ‘Before I leave the sacred tent, I want King Solomon to swear to me that he will not order his soldiers to execute me.’”

52 Solomon promised, “If he behaves honorably, I will not harm him at all. But if I discover that he is actually disloyal to me, I will have my soldiers execute him.” **53** Then King Solomon sent some men to get Adonijah, and they brought him back from the altar. He came to Solomon and bowed down respectfully in front of him. Then Solomon told him, “You may go home.”

2 **1** Later, David realized that he was about to die, so he gave some final instructions to his son Solomon. He said, **2** “I am about to die, as everyone on earth does. **Then you will be the king, so** you must show strong character and great maturity. **3** Do what Yahweh your God has told you to do. Conduct yourself as he wants you to do. Obey every one of the commandments that Moses recorded in the laws that he gave us. If you do this, you will prosper in all that you do and wherever you go. **4** If you continually do that, Yahweh will do what he promised me. He said, ‘If your descendants do what I tell them to do, and faithfully obey my commands with all their inner beings, they will always be the ones who will rule Israel.’ **5** There is something else that I want you to do. You know very well how Joab son of Zeruiah acted contrary to my wishes and interests. He murdered two men whom I wanted to be my army commander, first Abner son of Ner, then Amasa son of Jether. Previously those men had led armies that were fighting wars against my army, which Joab was commanding. But he murdered them during a peaceful time when they were not his opponents in war. He pretended to be friendly to them so that he could get close to them, but then he stabbed them, and he was so close that their blood got on his clothing. **6** I am confident that you are wise enough to know how to make sure that he does not die a peaceful death in old age. **7** But act kindly toward the children of Barzillai the Gileadite. Let them eat meals with you in the palace. Do that because Barzillai helped me when I was running away from your older brother Absalom. **8** I also want you to punish Shimei son of Gera, that Benjaminite from the town of Bahurim. Remember that he cursed me terribly on the day when I left Jerusalem and fled to the town of Mahanaim. Later he came to welcome me back when I was crossing the Jordan River to return to my royal palace**, and he asked me to forgive him**. I solemnly promised him that I would not execute him. I guaranteed that promise by my devotion to Yahweh. **9** But now you must surely punish him. You are a

wise man, so you will know what you should do to him. Make sure that he does not die peacefully in his old age."

10 After David gave these instructions to Solomon, he died. The Israelites buried him in the part of Jerusalem that they called the City of David. **11** David had been the king of Israel for 40 years. He had ruled for 7 years in Hebron and for 33 years in Jerusalem. **12** Then Solomon became the king in place of his father David. Yahweh enabled him to take firm control of the entire kingdom.

13 One day Adonijah came to speak with Solomon's mother Bathsheba. She asked him, "Have you come as a friend?" He replied, "Yes, as a friend." **14** But then he said, "I want to ask you to do something for me." She replied, "Tell me what you want me to do." **15** He said, "You certainly know that all the Israelite people expected me to be their king **because I am David's oldest living son**. But that did not happen. Instead, my younger brother became king, because that is what Yahweh wanted. **16** But I want to request one thing from you. Please do not refuse to do it." She replied, "Tell me what you want me to do." **17** He said, "Please ask King Solomon to allow me to marry Abishag, that woman from the city of Shunem. I am sure that he will agree to do anything you ask him to do." **18** Bathsheba replied, "All right, I will go and ask the king to allow you to marry her."

19 So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to tell him what Adonijah wanted. When she arrived, the king got up from his throne and bowed down to her **to honor her**. Then he sat down on his throne again, and he had his servants bring a throne for her to sit on as the queen mother. He had her sit **in a place of honor** on his right side. **20** Then she said, "I want to request one small thing from you. Please do not refuse to do it." The king replied, "I will not refuse to do what you ask. So please tell me what you want, madam." **21** She said, "Allow your older brother Adonijah to marry Abishag, the woman from the city of Shunem." **22** King Solomon replied, "You should not be asking me to allow Adonijah to marry Abishag! That is just like asking me to allow him to be the king instead of me. After all, he is my older brother**, so he may still think he deserves to be the king.** If I allow this, Adonijah will become the king **instead of me**, and only Abiathar will be the high priest **instead of Zadok as well** and Joab will remain the army commander." **23** Then Solomon made a solemn promise, guaranteeing it by his devotion to Yahweh. He said, "By asking to marry Abishag, Adonijah **has shown that he is not truly loyal to**

me, so he deserves to die! If I do not execute him, may God kill me instead and do other terrible things to me. 24 I solemnly promise that I am going to order someone to execute Adonijah today! I guarantee that promise by my devotion to Yahweh, who has made me the ruler over Israel, as my father David was. By making me the king, Yahweh has fulfilled his promise to David that his descendants would be kings of Israel." 25 Then King Solomon ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada to go and kill Adonijah, and Benaiah did that.

26 Then Solomon summoned Abiathar the priest and told him, "Go to the town of Anathoth, to your land there. You deserve to die as your punishment for being disloyal to me. But I will not execute you now, since you brought Yahweh's sacred chest to David my father when he had to flee from Jerusalem. You also endured the same troubles that he endured because you remained loyal to him when Absalom rebelled against him." 27 So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being Yahweh's high priest. As a result, he made happen what Yahweh had said would happen to the descendants of Eli. Many years before at Shiloh, Yahweh had said that someday they would no longer serve him as priests.

28 Joab had supported Adonijah when he tried to become the king, although he had not supported Absalom earlier. So when Solomon punished Adonijah and Abiathar, who had also supported him, someone came and told Joab about that. Joab ran to the sacred tent and held onto the projections at the corners of the altar because he thought no one would harm him there. 29 When someone told Solomon that Joab had run to the sacred tent and was alongside the altar, Solomon told Benaiah, "Go and execute Joab." 30 So Benaiah went to the sacred tent and told Joab, "The king commands you to come out." But Joab replied, "No, if I must die, I will die here." So Benaiah went back to the king and reported how Joab had responded when he told him to come out of the sacred tent. 31 The king replied to him, "Do just what he has said. Kill him and bury his body. If you do that, Yahweh will not punish me or my family for not providing justice for the two men whom Joab killed in peacetime for what they did during a war. 32 When you execute Joab, Yahweh will be punishing him for attacking and violently killing Abner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa, the commander of the army of Judah. Those two men were both much better men than he was. My father David did not know that Joab was planning to murder them. 33 Yahweh will always hold Joab and his descendants responsible because he murdered Abner and Amasa. But because David had nothing to do with those murders, Yahweh will always make things go well for David's descendants who rule over

Israel as he did.” **34** So Benaiah went to the sacred tent and executed Joab. Joab’s family buried his body on his property in the desolate area within the territory of the tribe of Judah. **35** Then King Solomon appointed Benaiah to be the army commander instead of Joab, and he appointed Zadok to be the only high priest, instead of Abiathar being a high priest as well.

36 Then the king sent a messenger to summon Shimei. **When Shimei arrived,** the king told him, “You must come and live here in Jerusalem. Build a house for yourself and stay in it. Do not leave the city to go anywhere else. **37** You can be sure that if you ever leave Jerusalem and go farther from the city than the Kidron Brook, I will have one of my soldiers execute you, and it will be your own fault.” **38** Shimei replied, “I agree, Your Majesty. I will do what you have said.” Then Shimei **moved to Jerusalem and** stayed in the city for a long time.

39 But three years later, two of Shimei’s slaves ran away. They fled to the city of Gath, and the king of the city, Achish son of Maacah, allowed them to stay there. When someone told Shimei that his slaves were in Gath, **40** he traveled on his donkey to that city. He found his slaves staying with King Achish, and he took them back home with him. **41** But someone told King Solomon that Shimei had left Jerusalem and gone to Gath, even though he was now back in Jerusalem. **42** So the king sent a messenger to summon Shimei. **When Shimei arrived,** he said to him, “I made you promise solemnly, with Yahweh as your witness, that you would not leave Jerusalem. I told you that you could be sure that I would execute you if you ever left Jerusalem to go anywhere else. And you replied to me, ‘I agree, Your Majesty. I will do what you have said.’ **43** So you should have done what you solemnly promised to Yahweh! You should not have disobeyed what I commanded you!” **44** The king also said to Shimei, “You know quite well in your inner being what evil things you did to my father David. Now Yahweh is going to punish you for doing those evil things. **45** But Yahweh will bless me, and he will always enable David’s descendants to rule Israel.” **46** Then the king ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada to execute Shimei. Benaiah took him out of the palace and executed him with this sword. **By executing Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei and exiling Abiathar,** Solomon obtained complete control of the kingdom of Israel.

3 **1** Then Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Solomon married his daughter and brought her to live in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City

of David. She lived there until Solomon's workers had finished building his palace, the temple of Yahweh, and the wall around Jerusalem. **2** Solomon had not yet built a temple where people could worship Yahweh, so the Israelite people were still offering sacrifices to him at shrines on the tops of hills. **3** Solomon loved Yahweh, and so he obeyed Yahweh just as his father David had done. But he, too, offered sacrifices and burned incense on hilltop shrines **before he built the temple**.

4 One day King Solomon went to the city of Gibeon to offer sacrifices. He went there because the main place of worship for the Israelites was there at that time. Solomon offered a thousand sacrifices that he burned completely on the altar. **5** That night, while Solomon was still at Gibeon, Yahweh appeared to him in a dream. He told him, "Tell me what you want, and I will give it to you." **6** Solomon replied, "My father David worshiped you, and you always treated him with great kindness. You did that because he was faithful to you, he treated other people properly, and he was honest with you about what he was truly thinking and planning. You have continued to treat him with great kindness by allowing me, his son, to become the next king of Israel after him. That is what I am right now. **7** Yahweh my God, David my father is no longer the king. You have made me the king instead. But I am still a young man. I do not know how I should rule the Israelites. **8** I live among the Israelite people whom you have chosen. They are a very large group of people. Because there are so many of them, no one can count them. **9** So please enable me think clearly so that I can rule your people well. Enable me to understand whether what people are doing is right or wrong. That way I will be able to fulfill the important task of making sure that your people treat one another fairly."

10 Yahweh was very pleased that Solomon had asked for this. **11** God told him, "You did not ask to live for a long time or to become very rich or that would you be able to kill your enemies. Instead, you asked me to enable you to become wise so that you would be able to decide people's cases fairly. As a result, **12** I will certainly do what you requested. I will indeed enable you to become very wise. As a result, you will be wiser than anyone who has already lived, and no one who lives later will ever be as wise as you are now. **13** I will also give you things that you did not ask for. I will enable you to become very rich, and people will honor you greatly. For as long as you live, no other king will have more wealth than you, and people will not honor any other king more than they honor you. **14** If you conduct your life as I want you to, and if you obey everything I have commanded, just as your father David did, then I will

also enable you to live for many years.” **15** Then Solomon woke up, and he realized that God had been speaking to him in a dream. He went back to Jerusalem and stood in front of **the sacred tent where** the sacred chest **was**. There he offered many sacrifices that he burned completely on the altar. He also offered fellowship sacrifices. Then he made a great feast for all his officials.

16 Shortly after that, two prostitutes came to King Solomon **to have him decide a dispute between them**. They stood in front of him **to present their cases**. **17** One of them said, “Your Majesty, please help me. This woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a baby while she was there in the house. **18** Two days after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth to a baby. No one else was there with us in the house. **19** One night while she was sleeping, this woman accidentally rolled on top of her baby, and she smothered it and it died. **20** So she got up while it was still night. I was asleep, and my baby boy was sleeping next to me. She picked him up and brought him to her bed, and she brought her dead baby boy and put him in my bed. **21** When I first woke up the next morning, I wanted to nurse my baby boy, but I found that he had died. However, after it got lighter, I could see that he was not the baby boy to whom I had given birth.” **22** But the other woman said, “That is not true! The baby boy who is alive is my son, and the baby boy who died is your son!” Then the first woman responded, “No, the dead boy is your son, and the living boy is my son!” And they continued to argue that way as they stood before the king.

23 Then the king said, “Each of you is claiming that it is your own son who is alive and that it is the other woman’s son who has died.” **24** Then he told his servants, “Bring me a sword.” So his servants went and got him a sword. **25** Then the king told his servants, “Cut the baby boy who is still alive into two parts. Give one part to each of these women.” **26** But the woman whose son was alive felt great love for him **and did not want him to die**. So she said to the king, “No, Your Majesty! Please do not have your servants cut him in half **and kill him**! You may give him to the other woman.” But the other woman said to her, “No, neither you nor I will have him **alive**.” Then she told the servants, “Cut him in half.” **27** Then the king **pointed to the woman who had said not to cut the child in half and** said, “Do not kill the child, but give him to her. She is truly his mother.” **28** The Israelite people heard about how King Solomon had judged this case. This made them afraid to do anything wrong, because they knew that he

would recognize that they had done wrong. They realized that God had enabled him to be very wise so that he could decide people's cases fairly.

4 **1** During the time when Solomon was the king of Israel, **2** these were his most important officials. Azariah son of Zadok was the high priest. **3** Elihoreph son of Shisha and Ahijah son of Shisha were the official secretaries. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the man who reported to the people everything that Solomon decided they should do. **4** Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the army commander. People still honored and respected Zadok and Abiathar because they had been high priests. **5** Azariah son of Nathan was in charge of the district governors. Another of Nathan's sons, Zabud, was an important official who was the king's chief advisor. **6** Ahishar supervised **the servants who worked in** the royal palace. Adoniram son of Abda supervised the men whom the king required to work for him.

7 Solomon divided Israel into twelve districts. He appointed a man to supervise the collection of food from each district for him and **the others who lived and worked in** the palace. Each district governor was responsible for providing the food for one month in each year. **8** Here is a list of their names. Ben Hur was the governor for the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lived. **9** Ben Deker was the governor for the cities of Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan. **10** Ben Hesed was the governor for the region of Arubboth, which included the city of Sokoh and the area of Hepher. **11** Ben Abinadab was the governor for all of Naphoth Dor. (He married Solomon's daughter Taphath.) **12** Baana son of Ahilud was the governor for the cities of Taanach and Megiddo and for the whole region near the city of Zarethan on the plain below Jezreel, from the city of Beth Shan as far as the city of Abel Meholah, including the city of Jokmeam. **13** Ben Geber was the governor for the region of Ramoth Gilead. This region included the villages in Gilead that had belonged to Jair son of Manasseh. This region also included the area of Argob in Bashan. In that area there were 60 large cities. Each city had a wall around it, and the gates in the walls had bronze bars. **14** Ahinadab son of Iddo was the governor for the city of Mahanaim **and the surrounding area**. **15** Ahimaaz was the governor for **the territory of the tribe of** Naphtali. (He also married one of Solomon's daughters. Her name was Basemath.) **16** Baana son of Hushai was the governor for **the territory of the tribe of** Asher and the city of Bealoth. **17** Jehoshaphat son of Paruah was the

governor for the territory of the tribe of Issachar. 18 Shimei son of Ela was the governor for the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. 19 Geber son of Uri was the governor for the region of Gilead. That region included the area that Sihon, the king of the Amorites, had formerly ruled. It also included the area that Og, the king of Bashan, had formerly ruled. One governor, Geber, was responsible for this entire region even though it was very large.

20 There were very many people in Judah and Israel at that time, just as there are very many grains of sand on the seashore. They had plenty of food to eat and beverages to drink, and they were happy. 21 Solomon's kingdom extended from the Euphrates River in the northeast to the region of Philistia in the west and to the border of Egypt in the southwest. Throughout his reign, he ruled the people groups in that area, and they brought him tribute. 22 In order to feed all the people who lived and worked at his palace, every day Solomon needed more than 3,000 kilograms of fine flour and more than 6,000 kilograms of regular flour. 23 He also needed ten fat oxen, 20 cows that had grazed in pastures, and 100 sheep. The food for the palace also included wild game such as deer, gazelle, and roebucks, as well as birds that people had fed to make them fat. 24 Solomon needed such great supplies because his kingdom included the entire area west of the Euphrates River from the city of Tiphsah in the northeast to the city of Gaza in the southwest. All of the kings in that area were his subjects. And he had peaceful relations with all of the rulers of the kingdoms that were next to his. 25 For the whole time that Solomon reigned, the people of Judah and Israel were safe throughout their entire territory. They were able to plant and harvest abundant crops without anyone disturbing them. 26 Solomon had 40,000 stalls for the horses that pulled his chariots. He had 12,000 men who rode on horses. 27 The twelve district governors supplied the food that King Solomon needed for himself and for all those who ate with him in the palace. Each governor supplied food for one month each year. They provided everything that Solomon needed in the palace. 28 They also brought barley and straw for the horses that pulled the chariots and for the fast horses that messengers rode. Just as the king required them to do, they brought these things to the stalls where the horses stayed.

29 God enabled Solomon to be wise and to understand things very well. God also enabled Solomon to learn about and remember a huge number of things. 30 Solomon was wiser than all of the wise men in the region to the east of Israel and all of the wise men in Egypt. 31 People considered Ethan the Ezrahite and the three sons of Mahol, Heman, Calcol, and

Darda, to be very wise. But Solomon was even wiser than they were and wiser than anyone else. People in all the nearby countries heard about Solomon. **32** Solomon composed 3,000 proverbs, and he wrote 1,005 songs. **33** He taught people about various kinds of plants, from the huge cedar trees that grow in Lebanon to the tiny hyssop plants that grow in cracks in walls. He also taught people about wild animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. **34** People came from many different parts of the world to listen to the wise things that Solomon said. Many kings learned how wise Solomon was, and they sent people to listen to him **and then return and tell them what Solomon had said**.

5 **1** Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, had always been an ally of King David. So when he heard that Solomon had succeeded his father David as king, he sent messengers to Solomon **to congratulate him**. **2** **In response,** Solomon sent his own messengers to Hiram to give him this message: **3** "You know that my father David wanted to build a temple in which we could worship Yahweh our God. But he was not able to do that, because the enemy kings around him kept attacking him. Yahweh finally enabled him to defeat all his enemies. **4** Yahweh our God has enabled us to have peaceful relations now with all of the countries around us. No one is attacking us, and nothing bad is happening. **5** So I am now planning to build a temple in which we can worship Yahweh our God. I will be doing what Yahweh promised my father David when he told him, 'I am going to make one of your sons the next king after you die, and that son will build a temple where you Israelites can worship me.' **6** So I am asking you to order your workers to cut down cedar trees in Lebanon **to make lumber** for me. My men will work with them, and I will pay your workers whatever you ask. I want to hire your workers because, as you know, none of us Israelites know how to cut down trees as well as you Sidonians do."

7 When Hiram heard the message from Solomon, he was very happy. He said, "I thank Yahweh today for giving David such a wise son to rule that great nation!" **8** He sent this message back to Solomon, "You sent messengers to ask me to do something, and I agree to do it. I will provide as many cedar and cypress logs as you want. **9** My workers will bring the logs down from the Lebanon mountains to the sea. Then they will tie the logs together to make rafts**, and they will float them along the coast** to the place that you indicate to me. Then my workers will untie the rafts, and your workers can take the logs out of the sea **and bring them to Jerusalem**. In exchange, I ask you to supply food for the people to whom I serve meals in my

palace.” 10 Solomon agreed, so Hiram arranged for his workers to supply all the cedar and cypress logs that Solomon wanted. 11 Each year Solomon provided Hiram with over 2,000 metric tons of wheat and over 4,000 liters of pure olive oil to feed the people in his palace. 12 Yahweh had promised that he would make Solomon wise, and he did that. Solomon and Hiram made a treaty with each other and agreed to be friends.

13 King Solomon required 30,000 Israelite men to become his workers. 14 Solomon’s official Adoniram supervised these men. Each month 10,000 of them went to Lebanon and worked for a month there. Then those men went back home for two months and other men went to work in Lebanon. 15 Solomon also forced 80,000 men to cut large blocks of stone out of the hills and 70,000 men to haul those stones to Jerusalem. 16 Solomon also assigned 3,300 men to supervise the work of all these other men. 17 The stone workers did what King Solomon had ordered them to do. They cut huge blocks of stone from quarries. They made sure that the stone in the blocks was solid. They trimmed the blocks to make them smooth and straight. That way the blocks could be the foundation of the temple. 18 So the men who worked for King Solomon and for King Hiram shaped the stones and prepared the timber to build the temple. Men from the city of Gebal who were experts in that kind of work helped them.

6 1 Solomon’s workers began to build the temple 480 years after the Israelite people left Egypt. That was the fourth year that Solomon was the king of Israel, The workers started constructing a temple for Yahweh in the second month of that year, the month of Ziv. 2 Inside, the main part of the temple was nearly 28 meters long, over 9 meters wide, and nearly 14 meters high. 3 There was a porch in front of the entrance to the Holy Place in the temple. This porch extended across the entire width of the temple, so it was over nine meters long. It extended nearly five meters outward from the front of the temple. 4 There were windows in the temple walls. The workers decorated these windows with beautiful metal cross-pieces. 5 Against the sides and all around the back of the outer wall of the temple, the workers built a structure that had rooms in it where priests could stay and also store items. 6 The workers built three rows of ledges along the side and back walls of the temple so that the addition could rest on them for support rather than on the temple itself. The bottom ledge was the thickest, so the bottom floor of the addition was two and one third meters wide. The middle ledge was less thick, so the middle floor of the addition was two and three quarters meters wide. The top ledge was

even less thick, so the top floor of the addition was three and a quarter meters wide. 7 When the workers cut out huge stones for the foundation of the temple at quarries, they also trimmed the stones there to make them smooth and straight. Because the workers used their hammers and chisels and other iron tools at the quarries, there was no loud noise at the site where the workers were constructing the temple. 8 To get to the middle floor of the addition, people went into the bottom floor through a door on the south side of the temple. From there, they could climb stairs up to the middle floor, and from there, they could climb more stairs up to the top floor. 9 After Solomon's workers finished building the walls of the temple, they made a roof for the building. They laid cedar beams across its width, and then they laid cedar boards in rows on top of the beams. 10 When the workers built the addition, its weight rested against the temple. But the workers put cedar beams on the ledges that supported the addition as a cushion to prevent damage to the stone walls of the temple. Each floor of the addition was two and one third meters high.

11 While his workers were constructing the temple, Yahweh told Solomon, 12 "If you continually obey everything that I commanded in the law of Moses, I will do for you what I promised to your father David. As for this temple that you are building, 13 I will live in it among the Israelite people. I will never abandon them."

14 Once Solomon's workers had finished constructing the temple's outer walls and roof, 15 they began to work on the inside of the temple. As he instructed them to do, they paneled the walls from the floor to the ceiling with cedar wood. They made the floor out of cypress planks. 16 The workers then built a room that extended out nine meters from the back wall of the temple. They used cedar boards to build the walls of this room. Those walls extended from the floor of the temple all the way up to its ceiling. This room was to be the Most Holy Place. 17 The front part of the temple, the Holy Place, occupied the other eighteen meters of its length. 18 The workers covered the walls inside the temple with cedar panels. They decorated the panels with carvings of gourds and blooming flowers. The cedar panels completely covered the walls. The stones of the walls did not appear anywhere. 19 And as for the room that the workers built at the back of the temple to be the Most Holy Place, where Yahweh's sacred chest would be, 20 that room was nine meters long, nine meters wide, and nine meters high on the inside. The workers covered its walls with very thin sheets of pure gold. The workers built a small stone altar just outside the Most Holy Place for burning incense. They covered this altar

with panels of cedar wood. **21** Solomon's workers then also covered the walls of the Holy Place with very thin sheets of pure gold. They made gold chains and hung them across the front of the Most Holy Place. They covered the front wall of the Most Holy Place with sheets of gold. **22** In this way, the workers covered all the walls of the temple with gold. They also covered the altar just outside the Most Holy Place with gold. **23** They made large statues from olive wood of two creatures with wings to put inside the Most Holy Place. The first statue was about four and one half meters high. **24** This statute had two wings that were about two and one third meters long, so that the distance across both wings was about four and one half meters. **25** The second statue also had wings that were about four and one half meters across. Since both cherubs were the same size and shape, **26** the second cherub was about four and one half meters high, the same height as the first cherub. **27** The workers placed these statues next to each other in the Most Holy Place. They arranged their wings so that the inner wing of one touched the inner wing of the other in the center of the room, and their outer wings touched the side walls of the room. **28** The workers covered the statues with very thin sheets of gold.

29 The workers had decorated the walls of the Holy Place with artistic carvings of winged creatures and palm trees and blooming flowers **before they covered the walls with gold**. So both the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place had decorative carvings. **30** They also covered the floors of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place with very thin sheets of gold. **31** The workers made a set of doors from olive wood to serve as the entrance to the Most Holy Place. The height and width of these doors was one fifth the height and width of the wall, **so they were about two meters high and wide**. **32** The workers carved decorations of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers into these olive-wood doors. Then they very carefully hammered thin sheets of gold onto these decorations **so that their designs would still show under the gold**. **33** They workers made a similar entrance for the Holy Place. They built a door frame from olive wood. The opening was one fourth the width of the wall**, so it was about two and one quarter meters wide**. **34** They made two doors from cypress wood **and fastened them to the doorframe**. The doors each had two panels **with hinges in the middle**, so a person could open only half of a door if he wanted to. **35** The workers carved decorations of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers into these doors. Then they very carefully hammered thin sheets of gold onto these decorations **so that their designs would still show under the gold**. **36** The workers created a

courtyard around the temple by building a wall. The wall consisted of three rows of stone with a row of cedar beams on top.

37 They laid the foundation of the temple of Yahweh in the month of Ziv, in the fourth year that Solomon ruled. **38** Solomon's workers finished building the temple in the eighth month, the month of Bul, of the eleventh year of his reign. They had built every part of the temple according to the design they were working from. It had taken them seven years to construct the building.

7 **1** Then Solomon had his workers build a palace for him. It took them 13 years to complete it. **2** One of the buildings they built was **a large hall whose name was** the House of the Forest of Lebanon. It was 46 meters long, 23 meters wide, and 14 meters high. The workers set up four rows of cedar pillars and laid cedar beams across the top of each row. **3** To make a roof, the workers laid cedar boards in rows on top of cedar beams that 45 pillars **in the middle of the hall** supported. Those pillars were in rows of 15**, creating four long sections within the hall**. **4** On each of the two side walls, there were three rows of windows. Each row consisted of a column of three windows. The rows on one wall were opposite the rows on the other wall. **5** All of the doors had square frames, and each window in each column was directly across from the matching window on the other wall. **6** The workers built an entranceway **for the House of the Forest of Lebanon**. It was an open space with rows of pillars on all sides. It was 23 meters long and 14 meters wide. There was a porch in front of this entranceway. It had a roof that pillars supported. **7** The workers also constructed a building whose name was the Porch of the Throne. It had a second name, the Porch of Judgment. That was where Solomon decided the legal cases that people asked him to judge. The workers used cedar wood to make the entire floor for this building. **8** In the courtyard behind the Porch of Judgment, the workers built a residence for Solomon to live in. They made it with the same materials and in the same style as the other buildings. They also built a similar residence for his wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt.

9 The workers built these buildings and the walls around the palace courtyard with stone blocks. They made sure that the stone in the blocks was solid. They trimmed the blocks with saws so that the interior and exterior walls of the buildings and the courtyard walls would be straight and smooth. They used stone blocks to build the entire height of these walls. **10** The

workers used huge stone blocks for the foundation of the palace. Some of these stones were about four and a half meters long, and others were over three and a half meters long. **11** The workers used other stone blocks to build the palace on top of these foundation stones. They cut those blocks to make them the sizes they needed. They also used cedar beams to build the palace. **12** The workers built a wall to create a large courtyard all around the palace. The wall consisted of three rows of stone with a row of cedar beams on top. It was just like the wall around the courtyard that surrounded the temple and the porch in front of it.

13 Solomon asked a man whose name was Hiram to come from Tyre to Jerusalem **to supervise all the work of making things from bronze for the temple**. **14** Hiram's mother was an Israelite woman from the tribe of Naphtali. His father, who had died, had been from the city of Tyre. His work had been to make things from bronze. Hiram himself was very skilled at making things from bronze. He agreed to come and help King Solomon by making all the bronze articles he needed for the temple. **15** Hiram made two bronze pillars **to put in front of the temple**. Each pillar was eight and one quarter meters tall and five and one half meters around. **16** Hiram made decorative tops for each of the pillars. He cast them in bronze. Each top was two and one quarter meters tall. **17** He formed bronze strands into the shape of nets to decorate the two pillar tops. He made seven of these networks for each pillar top. **18** Hiram made bronze decorations in the shape of pomegranates for the pillar tops. He put two rows of pomegranates around the edges of the parts of the pillar tops that the bronze nets covered. **19** Hiram made the upper portion of each pillar top in the shape of a lily. That portion was nearly two meters high. The pillars were on the porch **in front of the entrance to the temple**. **20** The lower portion of each pillar top, just above each pillar, was in the shape of a ball. That was the portion that the bronze nets covered, and that was the portion that the pomegranates decorated. There were 200 bronze pomegranates in rows around each pillar top. **21** Hiram and his helpers set up the pillars on the porch in front of the temple. Hiram named the pillar on the right side of the porch Jachin. He named the pillar on the left side of the porch Boaz. **22** Those pillars had tops in the shape of lilies. **When Hiram and his helpers set them up,** that completed his work of making the bronze pillars.

23 Hiram also made a giant water basin. People called it a sea **because it contained so much water**. Hiram made it by casting bronze **in a clay mold**. This sea was four and a half meters across its circular top, two and one third meters tall, and nearly 14 meters around. **24** All

around the outer edge of the sea there were decorations in the shape of gourds. There were two rows of gourds. There were ten gourds for every 45 centimeters of the outer edge. Hiram included the gourds as part of the design of the sea when he cast it. **25** Hiram cast 12 bronze statues of oxen to be a stand for the sea. He placed the oxen in groups of three facing outward to the north, south, east, and west. Then workers put the sea on the statues of the oxen, and it covered their backs. **26** The sides of this large water basin were eight centimeters thick. When Hiram cast the basin, he made the rim curve outward, like the rim of a cup and like the petals of a lily. The basin could hold over 40,000 liters of water.

27 Hiram also made ten bronze carts **to hold and transport smaller water basins**. Each cart was nearly two meters long, nearly two meters wide, and about one and a quarter meters high. **28** Each cart had a framework of bronze bars. Hiram attached bronze panels to the sides of the framework. **29** There were figures of lions, bulls, and winged creatures on those panels. At the bottom of the panels there were decorations that looked like garlands of flowers and leaves. On top of the framework of each cart there was a pedestal **to hold a water basin**. **30** Each cart had four bronze wheels and two bronze axles. At the top corners of each cart there were bronze supports to help hold up the water basin. On those supports there were decorations of flowers and leaves. **31** Although the panels on the sides of each cart were square, the pedestal on top of the cart that held the basin was round. This pedestal was 69 centimeters across. It was open at the top **so that the basin could sit in it**. There were decorative carvings all around the rim of its opening. **Even though part of the basin rested inside the pedestal,** it still extended 46 centimeters above the pedestal. **32** The four wheels of each cart were below its panels. These wheels were 69 centimeters high. Hiram molded the axles for the wheels as part of the cart itself. **33** Hiram made the wheels of the carts to be like the wheels that people make for chariots. He cast every part of these wheels, the axles and rims and spokes and hubs, from bronze. **34** Hiram also molded the bronze supports at the top corners of each cart as part of the cart itself. **35** A round pedestal 23 centimeters high was on top of each cart. Braces held this pedestal in place. There were decorative panels on the rest of the top of the cart. Hiram cast these braces and panels as part of the cart itself. **36** Hiram decorated the surfaces of these braces and the panels with figures of winged creatures, lions, and palm trees, with decorative wreaths all around them. He did this whenever there was space for decorations. **37** That is how Hiram made the ten carts. He cast them all from the same design, so they were all the same size and shape.

38 Hiram also made ten bronze basins, one for each of the ten carts. Each basin was nearly
five meters across and held 880 liters of water. **39** Hiram placed five of the carts in front of the
right side of the temple, and he placed the other five in front of the left side of the temple. He
put the giant water basin, the sea, by the southeast corner of the temple.

40 Hiram also made **bronze** pots **in which to boil meat**, shovels **for removing ashes**, and
bowls **to catch the blood of the animals that the priests sacrificed**. So he completed all of the
work that King Solomon requested him to do for Yahweh's temple. **41** **What Hiram made
included** the two pillars **for the temple porch**, the two ball-shaped tops for the pillars, the two
bronze nets that decorated the ball-shaped pillar tops, **42** the 400 bronze pomegranates that
decorated the two networks (these pomegranates were in two rows around each bronze net and
they covered the round lower parts of the pillar tops), **43** the ten carts, the ten basins that the
carts held, **44** the giant water basin that people called the sea, the 12 statues of oxen on whose
backs the sea rested, **45** the pots, the shovels, and the bowls. Hiram and his workers made all
these things that King Solomon requested him to make for Yahweh's temple. Hiram made them
all from bronze, and his workers then polished them **so that they would gleam brightly**.
46 Hiram and his workers made these things for Solomon in the Jordan River valley, between
the cities of Succoth and Zarethan. **They made them there because** the soil consisted of clay **that
they could use to cast things in bronze**. **47** Because Hiram used so much bronze to make these
objects, Solomon did not command his workers to weigh them. So no one ever knew what they
weighed.

48 Solomon's workers also made all the gold items that the priests needed to use in
Yahweh's temple. They made the golden altar and the golden table that held the sacred bread.
49 They made from pure gold the ten lampstands that stood in front of the Most Holy Place,
five on the south side and five on the north side. They made the golden decorations on the
lampstands that looked like flowers, the golden lamps themselves, and the golden tongs **for
removing burnt parts of the lamp wicks**. **50** Solomon's workers also made from pure gold the
dishes, wick snuffers, small bowls, incense dishes, and pans for carrying hot coals **that the
priests used in the temple**. They also made golden sockets for the doors of the Holy Place and
for the doors of the Most Holy Place.

51 So Solomon's workers finished all the work for Yahweh's temple. Then Solomon put the silver and gold and other valuable items that his father David had dedicated to Yahweh in the temple storerooms.

8 1 Solomon then sent messengers to tell all the Israelite elders, tribal leaders, and clan leaders to come to Jerusalem. He wanted them to join him in a ceremony to move Yahweh's sacred chest from the City of David (the part of Jerusalem that people now call Zion) into the temple that he had built. 2 King Solomon asked the leaders to come during the Festival of Shelters, which the Israelites observed in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month of the year. So a very large crowd of Israelites also came to Jerusalem at that time to celebrate this festival. 3 When the Israelite leaders had all arrived, the priests carried the sacred chest from the City of David 4 and brought it into the temple. The Levites who assisted the priests helped them carry into the temple the sacred tent and all the special equipment that the priests used only in the tent. 5 King Solomon and that large crowd of Israelites walked ahead of Yahweh's sacred chest as the priests carried it to the temple. They sacrificed a very large number of sheep and bulls. No one was able to count how many animals they sacrificed, because there were so many. 6 The priests carried the sacred chest into the temple and put it where it belonged. That was in the Most Holy Place, the special room that Solomon's workers had made at the back of the temple. They placed the sacred chest under the wings of the statues of the winged creatures there. 7 Then the wings of those statues extended over the sacred chest and over the poles that the priests used to carry it. 8 Those poles were so long that priests who were standing in the Holy Place at the entrance to the Most Holy Place could see their ends. But people standing outside the temple could not see them. Those poles are still there. 9 The only things that were in the sacred chest were the two stone tablets that Moses had put there at Mount Horeb. That was where Yahweh had made a covenant with the Israelites after they left Egypt. 10 When the priests came out of the Holy Place after putting the sacred chest in the temple, suddenly a cloud that represented Yahweh's presence filled the temple. 11 The glorious presence of Yahweh, which the cloud expressed, filled the temple. As a result, the priests were not able to continue their work.

12 Solomon looked at the temple and said, "Yahweh said that he would live in a dark cloud." 13 Then Solomon prayed to Yahweh, "I have surely built a temple for you that you will

always be able to live in.” **14** Then, while all the people stood there **respectfully**, the king turned around and faced them, and he asked God to make good things happen for them.
15 Then he said, “Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship! By his own power he has done what he promised to my father David. Yahweh told him, **16** ‘I rescued the Israelite people, who belong to me, from slavery in Egypt. But after that, I did not choose a city anywhere in their land and ask them to build a temple there where they would worship me. But I did choose you to be the king of Israel.’” **17** Then Solomon said, “My father David wanted very much to build a temple where we Israelite people could worship Yahweh our God. **18** But Yahweh told him, ‘You wanted to build a temple for me, and it was good that you wanted to do that. **19** However, you are not the one who is going to build it. Instead, one of your own sons will build a temple where the Israelites will worship me.’ **20** And now Yahweh has done what he promised to do. I have succeeded my father David as the king of Israel, just as Yahweh promised. And I have built a temple where we Israelite people can worship Yahweh our God.
21 I have provided a place within the temple for the sacred chest. It holds the two stone tablets that Moses put in it when Yahweh made a covenant with our ancestors when he rescued them from slavery in Egypt.”

22 Then Solomon turned around again and faced the altar **in the temple courtyard**. The Israelite people who had gathered for this occasion could see and hear him. He lifted his hands toward the sky **to pray**, **23** and he said, “Yahweh, you are the God whom we Israelite people worship. There is no god like you up in heaven or down here on the earth. You solemnly promised that you would be kind to us. And that is what you have always done for us when we have earnestly done what you wanted us to do. **24** You promised my father David, who served you faithfully, that his son would build a temple for you. And we here today can all see that by your own power you have done what you promised. **25** So now, Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, I am asking you to do the further things you promised to my father David. You told him that you would make sure that one of his descendants would always be the king of Israel if they would conduct their lives as he did. He obeyed you carefully. **26** You are the God whom we Israelite people worship. So now please do what you promised to do for my father David.

27 But you, God, will not really live on the earth. You are so great that the whole sky and even the spiritual realm beyond the sky are not a sufficient home for you. So this temple that I

have built is certainly not sufficient for you to live in either. **28** Even so, Yahweh, my God, please grant the requests that I make as I pray to you today. I have come to your temple today to pray. Please do what I am earnestly asking you to do. **29** I pray that you will always regard this temple favorably. You said that when we Israelites built a temple, you would be pleased to have people worship you there. So as I face this temple **to acknowledge you** as I pray, please answer my prayer. **30** When I pray to you, or when Israelite people pray to you, we will face this temple **to acknowledge you**. You will be faraway in heaven where you live, but please do what we ask and forgive us **for the sins that we have committed**.

31 Suppose one person accuses another person of doing something wrong to him. Suppose the first person makes the other person stand in front of your altar outside this temple and swear, 'I did not do that. May God punish me if I am not telling the truth!' **32** In that case, please pay attention in heaven and decide which of these people is telling the truth. Then punish the person who is guilty with the punishment that he deserves, and reward the person who is innocent for having done what is right.

33 Suppose that the enemies of your Israelite people defeat their army in a battle because the Israelites have sinned against you. And suppose that the Israelites then admit that they have done wrong by sinning and that you are right to punish them for sinning. Suppose they stop acting in a sinful way. And suppose they face in the direction of this temple **to acknowledge you** and plead with you to help them. **34** In that case, please pay attention in heaven, and please forgive your Israelite people for the sins that they have committed. Bring back to this land that you gave to our ancestors any prisoners whom the enemy army may have captured and taken away.

35 Suppose that your Israelite people sin against you and, to punish them, you do not allow any rain to fall from the sky. Suppose that, because you are punishing them in this way, they face in the direction of this temple **to acknowledge you**, and they pray. Suppose that they admit that you are right to punish them for sinning. Suppose they stop acting in a sinful way. **36** In that case, **by not allowing rain to fall,** you would have taught them that they needed to live differently. So then please pay attention in heaven to their prayer, and forgive your Israelite people for the sins they have committed. Then send rain on this land that you have decided will belong permanently to your people.

37 Suppose the people of Israel are not able to grow enough food to eat. Or suppose a deadly disease spreads among the people. Or suppose blight or mildew ruin their crops or locusts or grasshoppers eat up their crops. Or suppose a person is in great distress because an enemy army has surrounded the city where he lives and is attacking it. Or suppose a person gets sick, or many people get sick. **38** And suppose an Israelite person recognizes in his inner being that he is suffering because you are correcting him for sinning. And suppose that he pleads with you to help him, stretching out his hands toward this temple **to acknowledge you**. **39** In that case, please pay attention to his prayer in heaven where you live. If he is truly sorry for his sins, forgive him and help him overcome the trouble he has. You are the only one who knows whether a person is truly sorry. So act toward each person as he deserves. **40** Do this so that all of the Israelites will deeply respect you throughout their lives as they live in this land that you gave to our ancestors.

41 Suppose a foreigner who does not belong to your Israelite people comes from a faraway country here to this temple because he has heard what a great God you are. **42** I know that foreigners will hear about how great you are and what powerful things you have done for your people. Some of them may come to this temple to **worship you and** pray to you. **43** In that case, please pay attention to their prayers in heaven where you live. Do for them what they ask you to do. Do that so that all the people groups in the world will know how great you are and revere you as we, your Israelite people, do. Then people all over the world will know that you are truly present in this temple that I have built.

44 Suppose that you command your people to go and fight against one of their enemies. And suppose that the Israelite soldiers pray to you **for help**. Suppose that**, to acknowledge you,** they face in the direction of this city of Jerusalem, which you have chosen as the place for this temple that I have built where we Israelites can worship you. **45** In that case, please pay attention in heaven to their prayers for help, and enable them to defeat their enemies.

46 Suppose that your people sin against you, as everyone unfortunately does, and you become angry with them. Suppose that **to punish them** you allow one of their enemies to defeat them and take many of them away as prisoners to their own country, perhaps even to a country that is far away. **47** And suppose that, while your people are in that country to which their enemy took them as captives, they sincerely repent. Suppose they plead with you there and say, 'We confess that we have sinned by doing very wicked things.' **48** Suppose that they start

obeying you entirely again while they are still in the land of the enemy who captured them.
Suppose that they pray to you for help while to acknowledge you they face in the direction of
this land that you gave to our ancestors. Suppose that to acknowledge you they face in the
direction of this city of Jerusalem, which you have chosen as the place for this temple that I
have built where we Israelites can worship you. **49** In that case, please pay attention to their
prayers for help in heaven where you live, and please rescue them. **50** Forgive them for all the
sins that they have committed against you. Cause their enemies to feel kindly toward them and
to treat them with kindness and release them. **51** I feel that I can ask you to do all of these
things because we Israelites are your people. We will always belong to you. You brought our
ancestors out of Egypt, where they were greatly suffering as though they were in a blazing
furnace. **52** And so I ask you always to pay attention to what I or any of your Israelite people
may plead for you to do. When we cry out to you in prayer, please help us. **53** Yahweh my
Lord, we are your people because you chose us from all the other people groups in the world to
belong to you always. That is what you told Moses, your servant, to tell our ancestors when
you delivered them from slavery in Egypt."

54 During this prayer in which Solomon asked Yahweh to do these things, he had been
kneeling facing the altar and lifting his hands toward the sky. When he finished praying, he
lowered his hands and stood up. **55** He turned to face the crowd and asked God to make good
things happen for all the Israelite people. He said loudly, **56** "Praise Yahweh, who has allowed
us Israelite people, who belong to him, to live in safety. That is just what he promised he would
do. He has done every one of the good things that he promised to us through Moses, his
servant. **57** I pray that Yahweh our God will always help us, just as he helped the Israelites in
earlier times. I pray that he will never, ever leave us. **58** I pray that he will enable us to serve
him loyally, to conduct our lives as he wants us to, and to obey all of the laws that he gave to
our ancestors. **59** I pray that Yahweh our God will always remember these things I have asked
as I have pleaded for his help. I pray that he will always act mercifully toward me and toward
us Israelite people. I pray that he will do for us what we need each day. **60** If you do that, all
the people groups in the world will know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who actually is
God, and that there is no other one who is God at all. **61** I pray that all of you Israelites will
always commit yourselves fully to Yahweh and that you will always obey his laws, just as you
are doing now."

62 Then King Solomon and all the Israelites who had come to Jerusalem for the temple dedication offered sacrifices to Yahweh. 63 They sacrificed 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep as fellowship sacrifices to Yahweh. In this way the king and all the Israelites who were there dedicated Yahweh's temple. 64 The bronze altar in front of the temple was not big enough to hold all those sacrifices. So that day King Solomon temporarily made the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple a sacred place. There he and the people offered sacrifices that they burned completely on the altar, the accompanying offerings of flour, and the fat of the animals that were fellowship sacrifices. 65 Then Solomon and all the Israelites who had come to Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Shelters. They celebrated it for seven days. Since they had just celebrated the dedication of the temple for seven days, they celebrated together for a total of 14 days. There was a huge crowd of people there who had gathered in Yahweh's presence. They came from many different places in the land of Israel. 66 Once the Festival of Shelters was over, Solomon told the people they could go back to their homes. They asked God to make good things happen for him. As the people went home, they were very happy because of all the good things that Yahweh had done for David his servant and for the Israelite people, who belonged to him.

9 1 After Solomon's workers had finished building the temple and his palace and everything else that Solomon wanted them to build, 2 Yahweh appeared to him **in a dream**. That was the same way in which he had appeared to him earlier at the city of Gibeon.
3 Yahweh said to him, "I agree to do what asked me to do when you prayed to me at the temple. I have made the temple you built a place where I will be present in a special way so that people can always worship me there. I will always pay attention to what people pray when they face the temple, and I will always care deeply about what happens there. 4 And as for you, conduct your life as I want you to, just as your father David did. Obey very sincerely all the laws that I have commanded you to obey **as an Israelite**. If you do that, 5 then I will make sure that you are the king of Israel for your whole life and that your descendants reign as king after you. That is what I promised to your father David. I promised him that one of his descendants would always rule Israel. 6 But suppose that you or one of your descendants who becomes king stops worshiping me. Suppose you disobey the laws that I have given to you to obey. Suppose that you start to live as people live who worship other gods live. Suppose you even bow down to idols that represent those gods. 7 If you do that, then I will allow an enemy

to take the Israelite people away from this land that I have given to them. I will also allow an enemy to destroy this temple that I have made a place where I will be especially present. Then people throughout the world will use the Israelites as an example of a very bad thing happening to a nation. They will even mock other people by saying that they are like the Israelites. **8** Even though this temple is now very beautiful, **if you disobey me and worship other gods,** someday everyone who sees where it used to be will wonder whatever happened to it. They will hiss **in contempt** and they will ask, 'Why did Yahweh allow an enemy to take the Israelite people away from this land and destroy their temple?' **9** Other people will reply, 'This happened because the Israelite people abandoned Yahweh their God. He was the one who rescued their ancestors from slavery in Egypt. But they became loyal to other gods instead. They lived the way people who worship those other gods live. They even bowed down to idols that represented those gods. That is why Yahweh caused them to experience all these disasters.'" **10** Solomon's workers spent 20 years building Yahweh's temple and Solomon's palace. **11** Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, had arranged for his workers to provide Solomon with cedar and pine logs and with gold. That enabled Solomon to build everything he wanted to build. **In gratitude, after his workers had completed the building projects,** King Solomon gave Hiram 20 cities in the region of Galilee. **12** Hiram traveled from Tyre **to Galilee** to visit the cities that Solomon had given to him. When he saw them, he did not like them. **13** He said to Solomon, "My friend, those cities that you gave me are worthless." Because of that, Hiram called that region the Land of Cabul. That is still the name of that region now. **14** Hiram **was so upset because he** had provided Solomon with about 4,000 kilograms of gold **for the temple and for his palace**.

15 This is an account of how King Solomon forced some of the men who lived in the land of Israel to work hard on his building projects. He forced them to work on the temple, his palace, the Millo, and the wall around Jerusalem. He also forced them to work to make the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer into fortresses. **16** The city of Gezer belonged to Solomon because Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had sent his army to attack Gezer and capture it. His soldiers had burned all the houses in the city and killed all the people who lived there. They were Canaanites. Pharaoh then gave that city to his daughter as a gift when she married Solomon. **17** Then Solomon's workers rebuilt Gezer **as a border fortress city**. They also built up **as border fortress cities** Lower Beth Horon, **18** Baalath, and Tamar in the desolate area in the southern part of Judah. **19** They also built the cities where Solomon kept supplies and the

places where he kept his horses and chariots. They also built everything else that he wanted them to build in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and other places where he had royal authority. **20** There were many people still living in Solomon's kingdom who were not Israelites. Rather, they were Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. **21** These people were descendants of members of those people groups whom the Israelites were not able to kill **when they defeated those groups and occupied the land of Canaan**. It was those people whom Solomon forced to work hard on his building projects. The Israelites still require those people to work for them. **22** But Solomon did not force any Israelite people to become slaves. Instead, some of them became his soldiers, officials, army commanders, army officers, and leaders of his chariot forces and troops who rode on horses.

23 Solomon also had 550 officials who supervised the men who commanded the workers whom he forced to build all those places.

24 Solomon had his workers build a palace for his wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt. After she moved there from the City of David**, where she had been living,** Solomon had his workers build the Millo.

25 Three times each year, on the altar that he had built for Yahweh in front of the temple, Solomon offered sacrifices that the priests burned completely on the altar and fellowship sacrifices. He also brought incense for the priests to burn with these sacrifices. In that way Solomon made the temple the place where the Israelites would come to worship Yahweh.

26 King Solomon also had his workers build a fleet of ships at the city of Ezion Geber. That city is near the city of Elath on the shore of the Sea of Reeds in the territory of the Edomites. **27** Some of King Hiram's subjects were experienced sailors who knew well how to sail in the ocean. He had them go on these ships with Solomon's men. **28** They sailed together to the region of Ophir, and from there they brought back to Solomon about 14 metric tons of gold.

10 **1** The queen who ruled the land of Sheba heard that Solomon had great understanding of what Yahweh was like. She wanted to know whether what she had heard about him was true. So she traveled to Jerusalem to ask him the many difficult questions she had **about God**. **2** She brought many of her officials with her in a large caravan. The camels were carrying

spices, gemstones, and much gold as gifts for Solomon. Solomon welcomed her, and she asked him about everything she wanted to know. **3** Solomon answered all of her questions. Not one of her questions was too difficult for him to answer. **4** The Queen recognized that Solomon was very wise. She toured his palace, **5** and she saw the food that he served. She saw how his many officials sat in different places of honor at meals. She saw how the waiters and cupbearers wore splendid uniforms. She also saw the many animals that he brought to the temple for the priests to burn completely as sacrifices. What she saw overwhelmed her. **6** She told King Solomon, "Everything that I heard back in my own country about how wisely you speak is true! **7** But I did not believe it was true until I came here and saw it for myself. Indeed, what people told me was only half of what they could have told me about you. You are much wiser and wealthier than people told me. **8** How fortunate are your subjects! And how fortunate are your servants, who are always standing around you and listen to the wise things that you say! **9** I praise Yahweh, your God, who has shown that he is pleased with you by making you the king of Israel! Yahweh has always loved the Israelite people, and so he has appointed you to be a king who will rule them fairly and righteously." **10** The Queen of Sheba gave King Solomon as gifts from what she had brought over 4,000 kilograms of gold, many gemstones, and a very large amount of spices. The spices that she gave to Solomon were the greatest quantity of spices that anyone ever brought to Jerusalem.

11 (Solomon had built a fleet of ships that King Hiram's men sailed. Solomon built the ships to get gold from Ophir. But the crews also brought a large amount of sandalwood and many gemstones back from Ophir. **12** King Solomon had his workers use that wood to make furnishings for the temple and for his palace. He also had them it to make harps and lyres for the temple musicians. No one had ever brought such sandalwood to Israel before, and no one has brought s uch sandalwood to Israel since then.)

13 The Queen of Sheba admired many things in Jerusalem and asked for them, and Solomon gave them to her. He also gave her other generous gifts from his own riches. Then she and the officials who had come with her returned to their own land.

14 Each year Solomon received over 22 metric tons of gold in tribute from kingdoms that he controlled. **15** In addition to that, merchants and traders who traveled through and within Israel paid him duties and tolls. Arabian kings also often sent him gifts of gold, and the district

governors submitted the taxes they collected in gold. **16** King Solomon told his workers to take gold and hammer it **into thin sheets and cover** 200 large shields with **those thin sheets of** gold. They used nearly seven kilograms of gold to make each large shield. **17** He also told his workers to make 300 smaller shields. They covered each of them with about one and a half kilograms of gold. King Solomon put all of those shields in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. **18** He also had his workers make a large throne for him. The workers inlaid this throne with ivory, and they framed the ivory with borders of very fine gold. **19** There were six steps in front of the throne. The back of the throne was rounded at the top. There was an armrest on each side of the throne. There was a statue of a lion next to each armrest. **20** There was also a statue of a lion on both sides of each step. So altogether there were 12 statues of lions. There was no throne like this one in any other kingdom. **21** King Solomon and his court officials drank only from gold cups. His craftsmen also made all of the dishes for the House of the Forest of Lebanon by hammering out gold. They did not make any of these things from silver. That metal was so common during the time when Solomon ruled that people did not consider it to be valuable. **22** They had so much gold because King Solomon had a fleet of ships that were able to sail out on the sea. That is where King Hiram's ships also sailed **from Tyre**. The ships would sail to many different ports for three years. At the end of that time, they would bring back gold, silver, ivory, monkeys, and peacocks.

23 King Solomon became the richest and wisest king in the world. **24** People from many different places came to listen to the wise things that Solomon said about matters that God had enabled him to understand. **25** Each of the people who came to him brought presents. They brought articles made from silver or gold, or robes, or weapons, or spices, or horses, or mules. The people continued to do this every year.

26 Solomon acquired a great force of chariots and riders. In his army, he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 men who rode on horses. Solomon had built special cities in which to keep chariots, and he kept many of his chariots in them. But he also kept some chariots with him in Jerusalem. **27** During the years that Solomon was king, silver became very common in Jerusalem, just as stones are common. Cedar wood became very plentiful, just as the wood is plentiful that comes from the sycamore trees that grow in the foothills of Judah. **28** Solomon imported horses from Egypt and Kue. His purchasing agents would go to Kue and buy horses there at the current price. **29** In Egypt, his agents bought both horses and chariots. They paid

about seven kilograms of silver for each chariot and about two kilograms of silver for each horse. Agents of Solomon would then resell many of the horses and chariots to Hittite and Aramean kings.

11 **1** King Solomon had many foreign wives. First he married the daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Later he married many Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women. **2** He married them even though Yahweh had told the Israelites, "You must not marry people from those groups, because if you do, they will certainly persuade you to worship the gods that they worship!" But Solomon loved these women, and so he married them anyway. **3** Solomon married 700 women who were kings' daughters. These wives led him to start worshiping foreign gods. He also had 300 secondary wives. **4** By the time Solomon became old, his wives persuaded him to worship the gods their people groups worshiped. He was not completely faithful to Yahweh his God as his father David had been. **5** Solomon worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess that the Sidonians worshiped. He also worshiped Milcom, the disgusting god that the Ammonites worshiped. **6** In that way, Solomon did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Solomon's father David had always devoted himself entirely to Yahweh, but Solomon did not. **7** On the hill that is to the east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a place to worship Chemosh, the disgusting god that the Moabites worshiped. He also built a place to worship Molech, the disgusting god that the Ammonites worshiped. **8** Solomon built similar high places for all of his foreign wives so that they could burn incense and offer sacrifices to the gods that their people groups worshiped. **9** Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped, had appeared to Solomon twice. Even so, Solomon began to worship gods other than Yahweh. So Yahweh became very angry with him. **10** **When he appeared to Solomon the second time,** Yahweh had commanded him not to worship foreign gods. But Solomon had disobeyed what Yahweh told him. **11** Yahweh told him, "You have disobeyed the laws that I gave the Israelites for their king when I made my covenant with them. So you can be sure that I am going to make someone else, one of your officials, the king of Israel. **12** But because of what I promised your father David, I will allow you to rule your kingdom while you are still living. But after you die, I will not allow your son to rule the **whole** kingdom. **13** However, I will allow him to rule some of the kingdom. I will allow him to rule one tribe. I will do that in order to honor my servant David **by allowing one of his descendants always to be a**

king. And because I have chosen Jerusalem as the location for my temple, I will allow your son to rule the tribe of Judah, whose territory includes Jerusalem."

14 Then Yahweh enabled Hadad, a son of the king of Edom, to become Solomon's enemy and lead the Edomites to rebel against him. **15** This is what happened. Many years before, David's army had fought against Edom and conquered it. After the fighting was over, his army commander Joab had gone to Edom to supervise the Israelite soldiers who were burying their fellow soldiers whom the Edomites had killed during the war. While he was there, Joab tried to kill every Edomite man and boy. **16** Joab and his whole army stayed in Edom for six months so that they could kill as many Edomite males as possible. **17** Hadad was a young child at that time. But some of the officials of his father, the king of Edom, carried him away, hoping to bring him to Egypt where he would be safe. **18** First they fled to the region of Midian. From there, they undertook the difficult journey through the desolate area of Paran. They found guides there who traveled with them and helped them make that journey. When they got to Egypt, they asked Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to allow them to live safely in his country. Pharaoh gave Hadad a house with some property and he ordered his servants to provide him with food regularly. **19** The king liked Hadad very much. As a result, he allowed him to marry the sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes. **20** Later, the sister of Tahpenes had a baby boy. The name of this son of Hadad was Genubath. Tahpenes herself nursed him in the royal palace. He grew up there with Pharaoh's sons. **21** Much later, while Hadad was still in Egypt, he learned that King David and Joab, the commander of David's army, had both died. So he asked Pharaoh, "Please allow me to return to my own country." **22** But Pharaoh said to him, "You have everything that you need here with me, so you ought to be content to stay here." Hadad replied, "I do have everything I need here, but please allow me to leave anyway," and Pharaoh allowed him to leave, and he led the Edomites to rebel against Solomon.

23 God also enabled another man, Rezon son of Eliada, to become Solomon's enemy. Rezon had been an official of King Hadadezer, who ruled the area of Zobah. But Rezon had stopped serving him and had run away. **24** This is what happened. David's army defeated Hadadezer and killed many of his soldiers. Rezon escaped with some other soldiers, and together they formed a group of outlaws with Rezon as their leader. They went to Damascus and settled there, and they took control of the city. **25** Just like Hadad, Rezon was an enemy of

Israel for the rest of the time that Solomon was king. Rezon hated the Israelites bitterly. He eventually controlled the whole region of Aram.

26 Another man who rebelled against Solomon was one of his officials. His name was Jeroboam son of Nebat. Nebat had lived in the city of Zeredah within the territory of the tribe of Ephraim. Nebat had died, so that Jereboam's mother Zeruah was a widow. **27** This is what happened. Solomon had his workers build the Millo and finish building walls all around the City of David. **28** Jeroboam was a very skillful young man. **He had worked on these building projects, and** Solomon had seen that he was able to accomplish tasks effectively. So Solomon appointed him to supervise all the men from the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim whom he forced to work. **29** One day as Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem **for his work in the area north of there**, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the road. The two of them were alone, away from any city. Ahijah was wearing a new robe, **30** which he took off and tore into 12 pieces. **31** He told Jeroboam, "Take ten of these pieces for yourself, because Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you, 'I am going to take the kingdom away from Solomon, and I am going to make you the ruler of ten of the tribes of Israel. **32** However, I will allow Solomon's descendants to keep ruling one tribe. I will do that in order to honor my servant David. And because I have chosen Jerusalem from all of the Israelite cities **to be the location for my temple, I will allow his descendants to rule the tribe of Judah, whose territory includes Jerusalem**. **33** I am going to do this because Solomon has become unfaithful to me **and has caused many Israelites to become unfaithful to me as well**. He has been worshiping Asherah, the goddess that the Sidonians worship, Chemosh, the god that the Moabites worship, and Molech, the god that the Ammonites worship. He has not conducted his life as I want people to. He has not obeyed my laws the way his father David did. **34** But I will not stop Solomon from ruling the entire kingdom of Israel while he is alive. Instead, I will allow him to remain as king. I will do that in order to honor David, whom I chose **to be the king of Israel** and who faithfully obeyed my laws. **35** Instead, I will stop his son from ruling the entire kingdom, and I will allow you to become the king of ten of the Israelite tribes. **36** I will allow Solomon's son to rule one tribe so that I will always see one of David's descendants ruling in Jerusalem. I chose that city to be the place where the Israelites would worship me. **37** You are now an official, but I will enable you to become the king of Israel, and you will rule all the territory that you want to rule. **38** But you must obey everything that I command you to do. You must conduct your life as I want you to. You must do things that I consider to be right. You must obey my laws as

David did. If you do those things, I will help you. I will make sure that your descendants become kings of Israel after you die, as I have done for David. 39 Because of Solomon's sins, I will punish David's descendants, but I will not continue to punish them forever.'" 40 Solomon found out what Ahijah told Jeroboam, and so he tried to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam escaped and went to Egypt. Shishak, the king of Egypt, protected him. Jeroboam stayed there until after Solomon died.

41 The book that records the events of Solomon's reign describes further things that he did and many of the wise things that he said. 42 Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all of Israel for 40 years. 43 Then Solomon died. The Israelites buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. Solomon's son Rehoboam became the next king.

12 1 Leaders from all the tribes of Israel went to the city of Shechem in order to appoint Rehoboam as their king. So Rehoboam also went there. 2 Jeroboam had fled to Egypt to escape from Solomon, and he had settled there. He learned in Egypt that Solomon had died. 3 The Israelite leaders asked him to come back to Israel, and he did. They went together to speak with Rehoboam. They told him, 4 "Your father Solomon forced us to work very hard, but if you allow us to work less hard and allow us to pay fewer taxes, then we will agree to be your subjects." 5 He replied, "Go away for a couple of days to give me some time to consider that. Then come back and I will give you my answer." So those leaders and Jeroboam left.

6 Then King Rehoboam asked for advice from the older men who had been officials of his father Solomon while he was still living. He asked them, "What do you think I should say in response to what these Israelite leaders have asked me to do?" 7 They replied, "We recommend that on this occasion, you humble yourself and do what they have asked. Speak kindly to them when you reply to them. If you do that, they will always be your loyal subjects." 8 But Rehoboam decided not to do what the older men had advised him to do. Instead, he asked for advice from the younger men who had been his friends since they were boys and who were now his advisors. 9 He asked them, "What do you think we should say in response to these Israelite leaders who have asked me to allow them to work less hard than my father required them to work?" 10 Those young men who were his boyhood friends replied, "This is what you should tell these people who asked you to allow them to work less hard than

your father required them to work: ‘I am a harsher man than my father was. **11** This is my answer to you. My father required you to work hard. But I am going to make you work even harder. My father had his overseers discipline you Israelite workers harshly. But I am going to have them discipline you even more harshly.’”

12 A couple of days after Jeroboam and the Israelite leaders first met with Rehoboam, they came to speak with him again, just as he had told them to do. **13** The king disregarded the advice that the older men had given him. Instead, he spoke roughly to the Israelite leaders. **14** He told them what the younger men had advised him to say. He said, “My father required you to work hard. But I am going to make you work even harder. My father had his overseers discipline you Israelite workers harshly. But I am going to have them discipline you even more harshly.” **15** So the king did not do what the Israelite leaders wanted him to do. That was because Yahweh caused him to refuse their request. In that way, Yahweh made happen what he had told Jeroboam son of Nebat through the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite.

16 When the Israelite leaders realized that Rehoboam was not going to do what they had asked, they responded to him by shouting, “We do not want to be subjects of this descendant of King David! We will not accept this grandson of Jesse as our ruler! We Israelites should all go home! As for this descendant of David, he can rule his own tribe!” So the Israelite leaders returned to their homes.

17 (After that, the only Israelites who accepted Rehoboam as their king were the members of the tribe of Judah.) **18** King Rehoboam had an official whose name was Adoniram. He supervised the men whom Rehoboam forced to work for him. **Before the Israelite leaders left,** King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram **to try to make them obey him**. But the Israelite people killed him by throwing stones at him. When that happened, King Rehoboam got into his chariot as fast as he could and escaped to Jerusalem. **19** Ever since that time, the people of the northern tribes of Israel have refused to be subjects of descendants of King David. **20** When the people of the northern tribes heard that Jeroboam had returned from Egypt, they invited him to come to a gathering of their representatives. There they appointed him to be their king. Only the people of the tribe of Judah continued to be loyal to the kings who were descendants of David.

21 When Rehoboam got back to Jerusalem, he gathered 180,000 of the best soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He wanted them to fight against soldiers of the northern

Israelite tribes **and defeat them** so that he could rule all of the Israelite tribes again. **22** But God spoke to the prophet Shemaiah and said to him, **23** "Here is something that I want you to tell Rehoboam son of Solomon, the king of Judah, the army of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the people of those tribes. **24** Tell them that I say that they must not go to fight against their fellow Israelites. They must all go home. Tell them that this has happened because I wanted it to happen." **So Shemaiah went and told that to them, and** they all obeyed what Yahweh had commanded them to do and went home.

25 Then Jeroboam told his workers to rebuild walls around the city of Shechem in the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lived. He moved to that city **and made it his capital**. Later he and his workers went from there to the city of Peniel, and they rebuilt the walls around that city **to make it a border fortress**. **26** Then Jeroboam said to himself, "It seems likely that the descendants of David will soon rule all of Israel once again. **27** If my subjects continue to go to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices to Yahweh at the temple there, soon they will want Rehoboam to be their king again. Then they will kill me and agree to become his subjects again." **28** So he asked his advisors what they thought he should do**, and then he did what they suggested**. He told his workers to make two gold statues of calves. Then he told the people whom he ruled, "It would be too difficult for you to keep traveling to Jerusalem to worship. You people of Israel, look! These statues represent the God who rescued our ancestors from slavery in Egypt **and you can worship them here**!" **29** He told his workers to place one of the statues in the city of Bethel **in the south of his kingdom** and one in the city of Dan **in the north**. **30** What Jeroboam did caused the people of his kingdom to sin **because they started worshiping these calves as idols**. They would travel all the way to the city of Dan to worship where one of the calves was.
31 Jeroboam had his workers build shrines for worship on the top of hills. He also appointed Israelite men from many different tribes to be priests, even though the law of Moses said that only men from the tribe of Levi could be priests. **32** Jeroboam also held a celebration like the Festival of Shelters that people celebrated in Judah each year. However, he held it on the fifteenth day of the eighth month **rather than on that day in the seventh month, as the law of Moses commanded**. He went to Bethel and offered sacrifices to the golden calf statue that he had made and put there. He had the priests whom he had appointed come to Bethel and work in the shrine that his workers had built there. **33** Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar **in that shrine** on the fifteenth day of the eighth month. He had chosen that month himself. There on

that altar he burned incense as an offering. And he declared that the people should celebrate that festival on that same day every year.

13 **1** Yahweh commanded a prophet to go from where he lived in the kingdom of Judah to the city of Bethel, and the prophet obeyed him. He arrived there right at the time when Jeroboam was standing at the altar, ready to burn incense. **2** Saying what Yahweh told him to say, the prophet shouted, "This is what Yahweh says about this altar! 'I want you to know that someday King David will have a descendant whose name will be Josiah. He will come to this altar and slaughter the priests who burn incense while offering sacrifices at this shrine. He will burn the bones of dead people on this altar.'" **3** Then the prophet told them how they would know that what he had said was true. He said, "Yahweh has announced that he is going to make something happen so that you will know that what he has said is true. This altar will split apart, and the ashes that are on it will fall onto the ground." **4** When King Jeroboam heard what the prophet said about the altar at Bethel, at which he was standing, he pointed his finger at him and told his servants, "Seize that man!" But immediately his arm stuck in that position, and he could not lower it. **5** Then the altar split apart, and the ashes that were on it spilled out on the ground. That is exactly what the prophet had said that Yahweh had announced would happen. **6** Then the king said to the prophet, "Please pray that Yahweh will be merciful to me and heal my arm!" So the prophet prayed, and Yahweh healed the king's arm so that he could move it again. **7** Then the king said to the prophet, "Come with me to my house and I will serve you a meal. I will also give you a reward for what you have done!" **8** But the prophet replied, "Even if you gave me half of what you owned, I would not go with you, and I would not eat or drink anything here. **9** When Yahweh spoke to me, he commanded me not to eat or drink anything here, so I will not do that. He also commanded me to go home by traveling on a different road than the one I traveled on to come here." **10** Then the prophet started to return home. He walked on a different road than the one on which he had walked to come to Bethel.

11 At that time there was an old man living in Bethel who was a prophet himself. His sons came and told him what the prophet from Judah had done there on that day. They also told him what the prophet had said to the king. **12** Their father asked, "On what road did he leave to return home?" His sons had seen what road the prophet from Judah had started walking on, so they told him which road it was. **13** Then he said to his sons, "Get a donkey ready for me to

ride." So they did that, and he got onto that donkey. **14** He went along the road to find the prophet from Judah. He found him sitting to rest under the large oak tree that was in that area. The old man asked him, "Are you the prophet who came from Judah?" He replied, "Yes, I am." **15** The old man said to him, "Please come home with me so that I can serve you a meal." **16** He replied, "No, I cannot accept your invitation to go with you to your house. I can not eat or drink anything with you here. **17** I must refuse because Yahweh told me, 'Do not eat or drink anything there, and do not return home on the road on which you traveled to Bethel.'" **18** Then the old man said to him, "I also am a prophet, just as you are. Yahweh sent an angel to tell me that I should bring you home with me and serve you a meal." (But the old prophet was lying when he said that.) **19** So the prophet from Judah returned with the old man to his home, and he ate a meal with him there.

20 While they were sitting at the table, Yahweh gave the old prophet a message to speak the prophet from Judah. **21** Then the man shouted to the prophet, "This is what Yahweh says to you. 'You have not done what I commanded you to do, and so you have disobeyed the instructions I gave you! **22** Instead, you have come back to this house and eaten a meal, even though I commanded you not to eat anything there. As a result, you will die, and people will not bury your body in the same place where people buried your ancestors.'" **23** When they had finished eating, the old man had his sons get his donkey ready so that the prophet from Judah could ride on it, and the prophet left. **24** But as he was going, a lion met him and killed him. It left the prophet's body lying on the road. The donkey stood beside it, and the lion also stood beside it. **25** When some men who were walking along that road came to that place, they were surprised to see the prophet's body on the road and the lion standing next to it. So they went into the city of Bethel, where the old man lived, and they reported what they had seen.

26 When the old man who had brought the prophet from Judah to his home heard what had happened, he said, "The man whom the lion killed is the prophet who disobeyed the instructions that Yahweh gave him. Yahweh allowed the lion to attack him and kill him. That is exactly what Yahweh said would happen in the message he gave me for him!" **27** Then he told his sons, "Get another donkey ready for me to ride." So they did that. **28** Then the old man rode on that donkey along the road on which the prophet had started to return to Judah. He came to the place where the prophet's body had fallen on the road. He saw his other donkey and the lion standing there next to the man's body. But the lion had not eaten any of the

prophet's flesh, and it had not attacked the donkey. **29** The old man picked up the body of the prophet and put it on his donkey. He brought it back to Bethel so that he could mourn for him and bury his body. **30** He buried the prophet's body in the grave where people had buried other members of his family. Then he and other people who lived in the city mourned for him. They said, "We are so sorry that our fellow Israelite has died!" **31** After they had buried him, the old man told his sons, "When I die, I want you to bury me in this grave where we have just buried the prophet from Judah. Put my body next to his. **32** I want you to bury me in this grave because I am confident that the things Yahweh told this man to say about the altar here in Bethel will happen. What he said about the shrines on the tops of hills here in this kingdom will also surely happen."

33 But even after these things happened, King Jeroboam did not stop doing the evil things that he had been doing. Instead, he appointed as priests even more men who were not descendants of Levi. He appointed anyone who wanted to be a priest, and as a result, he had many priests who served at the shrines that he had his workers build on the tops of hills.
34 When Jeroboam did these evil things, he sinned against Yahweh. As a result, Yahweh did not allow his descendants to become kings of Israel. Instead, he allowed someone to kill all of Jeroboam's living descendants.

14 **1** Shortly after Jeroboam chose to ignore Yahweh's warning about the hilltop shrines, his son Abijah became very sick. **2** Jeroboam told his wife, "I want you to disguise yourself so that no one will recognize that you are my wife. Then go to the city of Shiloh. That is where the prophet Ahijah lives. He is the man who met me and told me that I would become the king of Israel. **3** Take with you ten loaves of bread, some small flat cakes, and a jar of honey. Give them to him **as gifts**. Tell him about our son, and he will tell you whether he will become well again." **4** So that is what his wife did. She went to Shiloh, to Ahijah's house. Ahijah was not able to see, since he was very old and his eyes were no longer healthy. **5** But **before she got there,** Yahweh told Ahijah that Jeroboam's wife was coming to inquire about their son, who was very sick. He told him that when she arrived, she would be pretending to be someone else. Yahweh told Ahijah what he should say to her.

6 So when Ahijah heard her footsteps as she entered the doorway, he said to her, "Come in. I know you are Jeroboam's wife, so do not pretend that you are someone else. Yahweh has told

me to tell you some bad news. **7** Go back and tell Jeroboam this message from Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship: 'I chose you from among the common people and enabled you to become the king of **most of** my Israelite people. **8** I stopped David's descendants from ruling most of the people of the kingdom of Israel, and I allowed you to become the king of those Israelites instead. But you have not been like David, who served me very well. He obeyed my commandments very sincerely and wanted to do only things that I considered to be right. **9** But you have done more wicked things than any of the men who were kings of Israel before you. You have rejected me, and you have made me very angry by making metal images of other gods **so that you and others could worship them**. **10** Therefore, I am going to make terrible things happen to your family. I will allow someone to kill all of the males in your household, whether they are family members or servants, no matter where they live in your kingdom. I will completely destroy your family, just as fire completely destroys dung when people burn it. **11** Dogs will eat the bodies of any members of your household who die in cities. Scavenger birds will eat the bodies of any members of your household who die in the countryside.' This will surely happen, since Yahweh has said that it will happen. **12** So go back home. As soon as you return to the city where you live, your son will die. **13** People throughout Israel will mourn for him, and you will be able to bury him. He is the only one in Jeroboam's family who will receive a proper burial, because he is the only person in Jeroboam's family whose actions have pleased Yahweh. **14** Yahweh will enable a different man to become the king of Israel. That man will kill all of Jeroboam's family. This will happen very soon. In fact, Yahweh has already begun to make it happen. **15** Yahweh will punish the people of Israel. He will unsettle them, just as the strong, flowing water of a river unsettles the reeds that grow on its banks. He will finally expel the Israelite people from this good land that he gave to our ancestors. The Israelites have worshiped statues of the goddess Asherah, and by doing that, they have made Yahweh very angry. As a result, he will allow enemies to take them as captives into lands on the far side of the Euphrates River. **16** Yahweh will abandon the Israelite people because Jeroboam committed these sins of idolatry and led the Israelite people to commit them as well."

17 Then Jeroboam's wife got up and left, and she traveled back home to the city of Tirzah. Just as she was walking through the door of her house, her son died. **18** People throughout Israel mourned for him, and his family was able to bury him. That is just what Yahweh had told the prophet Ahijah, his servant, to say would happen.

19 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Jeroboam did, including the wars that his army fought and how he
ruled. **20** Jeroboam ruled for 22 years. Then he died, and his son Nadab became the next king.

21 Meanwhile, Solomon's son Rehoboam was ruling Judah. He had been 41 years old
when he started to rule, and he ruled for 17 years. He ruled in Jerusalem, the city that Yahweh
chose to be the place where the Israelites would worship him. Rehoboam's mother's name was
Naamah the Ammonitess. **22** The people of the kingdom of Judah did many things that
Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. They committed more sins than their ancestors had
committed. This made Yahweh very angry, because they were worshiping idols, and they
should have been worshiping only him. **23** Just as the northern Israelites had done, the Judeans
built places to worship foreign gods. On high hills and under big trees, they built shrines and
set up stone pillars and made wooden images to represent the goddess Asherah. **24** There were
also male shrine prostitutes at these places of worship. The Israelite people did the same
disgraceful things that the people had done whom Yahweh had forced to leave so that the
Israelites could possess the land.

25 When Rehoboam had been ruling for almost five years, King Shishak of Egypt came
with his soldiers to attack Jerusalem. **26** **They defeated the Judeans, and then** his soldiers took
away the valuable things they found in Yahweh's temple and in the royal palace. They also
took many other valuable things they found. Because they took the gold shields that Solomon's
workers had made, **27** King Rehoboam had his workers make bronze shields to replace them.
He had the officers of the soldiers who guarded the entrance to his palace take care of these
shields. **28** Whenever the king was going to come into the temple, those guards got those
shields and held them, and **after he left the temple,** they returned the shields to their storeroom.

29 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Rehoboam did. **30** The armies of Rehoboam and Jeroboam were
continually at war with one another. **31** Then Rehoboam died, and people buried him in the
part of Jerusalem that people call the City of David. That is where people had buried his
ancestors. Rehoboam's mother Naamah was an Ammonitess**, and that is why he became devoted
to idol worship**. After Rehoboam died, his son Abijam became the next king.

15 **1** Abijah became the king of Judah when Jeroboam had been the king of Israel for
almost 18 years. **2** Abijah ruled for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah
daughter of Abishalom. **3** Abijah committed the same kind of sins that his father had
committed. He was not completely faithful to Yahweh his God as his ancestor David had been.
4 But Yahweh had promised to David that one of his descendants would always be king in
Jerusalem. So Yahweh allowed Abijah's son to become king after he died. Yahweh also did not
allow any enemies to conquer Jerusalem. **5** Yahweh did that because David had done the
things that he had told the Israelites were good to do. When Yahweh had told David to do
something, David had always obeyed. The only time when David disobeyed Yahweh was when
he **had sexual relations with the wife of** Uriah the Hittite and **tried to hide what he had done by**
causing him to die in battle. **6** The kingdoms of Judah and Israel had been enemies when
Rehoboam and Jeroboam were their kings, and they continued to be enemies all during the
time that Abijah ruled.

7 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Abijam did, including the war that he fought against King
Jeroboam of Israel. **8** Abijah died, and the Israelites buried him in the part of Jerusalem that
people call the City of David. His son Asa became the next king.

9 Asa started to rule Judah after Jeroboam had been the king of Israel for almost 20 years.
10 He ruled in Jerusalem for 41 years. His grandmother was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.
11 Asa did the things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were good to do, as his ancestor
David had done. **12** He forced the male shrine prostitutes to leave Israel, and he also destroyed
all of the idols that his ancestors had made. **13** His grandmother Maacah had been in the
influential position of queen mother, but he removed her from that position. He did that
because she had made a disgusting wooden statue for the goddess Asherah. Asa had his
servants cut down the statue and burn it in the Kidron Valley. **14** He did not order his servants
to destroy the shrines for worship on the top of hills. Even so, he was completely faithful to
Yahweh for the whole time that he lived. **15** He told his servants to put in Yahweh's temple the
valuable things that his father had dedicated. He also told them to put there the things that he
had dedicated. These included gold, silver, and other valuable articles.

16 Asa fought wars against Baasha king of Israel during the whole time that he reigned.
17 Baasha's army invaded Judah. They captured the city of Ramah just north of Jerusalem.
Then they started to build a wall around it so that it would be a border fortress and they would be
able to prevent people from entering or leaving Asa's kingdom of Judah. 18 So Asa had his
officials collect all of the silver and golden articles that were still in the storerooms in the
temple and his palace. He told them to bring those things to Damascus and give them to Ben
Hadad, the king who ruled Aram from that city. Ben Hadad was the son of Tabrimmon and the
grandson of Hezion. Asa told his officials to tell Ben Hadad, 19 "My father had an alliance
with your father, and I would like to have an alliance with you. To make that alliance, I am
giving you this silver and gold. So please break the alliance you have with Baasha, the king of
Israel, and attack him. That way he will stop invading my kingdom because he will have to send
his army to fight your army." 20 When the officials spoke that message to Ben Hadad, he
agreed to do what Asa wanted. He ordered his commanders to lead their soldiers to attack some
areas in the kingdom of Israel. They attacked the cities of Ijon, Dan, and Abel Beth Maacah,
the region of Chinnereth, and the whole territory of the tribe of Naphtali. 21 When Baasha
learned that Ben Hadad's armies were attacking Israel, he ordered his soldiers to stop building
the wall around Ramah. He and his soldiers returned to his capital city of Tirzah and stayed
there. 22 Then King Asa sent messengers to tell the men throughout his kingdom of Judah that
he was requiring them all to go to Ramah. They were to carry away the stones and timber that
Baasha's soldiers had been using to build a wall around that city. With those stones and timber,
King Asa had his workers fortify the city of Mizpah and the city that people call Geba that is
within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

23 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Asa did during his reign, including the battles that his armies won
and the cities that he had his workers fortify. (When Asa became old, he got a foot disease.)
24 Asa died, and the Israelites buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people call the City of
David. That is where people had also buried his ancestors. Asa's son Jehoshaphat became the
next king.

25 Nadab son of Jeroboam started to rule Israel after Asa had been the king of Judah for
almost two years. Nadab ruled Israel for two years. 26 He did many things that Yahweh had
told the Israelites were evil. He behaved in the sinful way his father had behaved. He continued

to lead the Israelites to sin by worshiping the calf statues at the shrines in Bethel and Dan.
27 King Nadab and his soldiers were attacking the city of Gibbethon in the region of Philistia.
One of his military commanders, Baasha son of Ahijah from the tribe of Issachar, plotted against
him with some of the other commanders. Baasha killed Nadab at Gibbethon. 28 When Baasha
killed Nadab, Asa had been the king of Judah for almost three years. Baasha became the next
king of Israel. 29 As soon as he became king, Baasha commanded his soldiers to kill all the
rest of Jeroboam's living descendants. He made sure that none of them survived. That is
exactly what Yahweh had said would happen in the message that he gave to Ahijah the
Shilonite, his servant. 30 Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship, spoke that message
because he had become very angry with Jeroboam. Jeroboam made him angry by committing
many sins and leading the people of Israel to commit sins.

31 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Nadab did. 32 The armies of Asa and Baasha were continually at
war with one another.

33 Baasha son of Ahijah, started to rule Israel from the city of Tirzah after Asa had been
the king of Judah for almost three years. He ruled for 24 years. 34 Baasha did many things that
Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. He behaved the way King Jeroboam had behaved. He
continued to lead the Israelites to sin by worshiping the calf statues at the shrines in Bethel and
Dan.

16 1 Then Yahweh told Jehu son of Hanani to speak a message to Baasha. He told him to
say, 2 "You were an insignificant person, but I allowed you to become the king of Israel.
Despite that, you have done the same evil things that King Jeroboam did. You have led the
people of Israel to commit sins, and that has made me very angry. 3 So now I am going to
destroy you and your family completely. That is what I did to Jeroboam and his family, and I
am going to do the same thing to your family. 4 Dogs will eat the bodies of any members of
your household who die in cities. Scavenger birds will eat the bodies of any members of your
household who die in the countryside."

5 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Baasha did, including the battles that his armies won and other

things that he did. 6 When Baasha died, the Israelites buried him in Tirzah, his capital city. His son Elah became the next king. 7 Baasha did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. The things he did made Yahweh very angry. Baasha did the same kind of things that King Jeroboam and his descendants who ruled as kings after him had done. Yahweh was also angry with Baasha because he killed all of Jeroboam's family. That was why Yahweh gave a message to the prophet Jehu son of Hanani saying that he would destroy Baasha and his family.

8 Elah son of Baasha became the king of Israel after Asa had been the king of Judah for almost 26 years. Elah ruled in Tirzah until the next year. 9 One day Elah was in Tirzah, drinking wine in the home of Arza, the official who was responsible for the royal palace there. Elah had a military officer whose name was Zimri. Zimri commanded the drivers of half of Elah's chariots. Zimri plotted with some of the other officers to kill him. Elah had already become drunk. 10 Zimri went into Arza's house and stabbed Elah so that he died. Then Zimri became the next king of Israel. This happened when Asa had been the king of Judah for 27 years. 11 Once Zimri became king, as soon as he could, he commanded his soldiers to kill Baasha's whole remaining family. He killed every male in Baasha's family and all of Baasha's male friends. 12 In that way Zimri destroyed Baasha's whole remaining family. That is exactly what Yahweh had said would happen in the message that he gave to the prophet Jehu about what would happen to Baasha. 13 That message was about how Baasha and his son Elah had sinned and led the Israelite people to sin. They both encouraged the people to worship worthless idols. This made Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship, very angry. 14 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Elah did.

15 In that way, Zimri became the next king of Israel. This happened after Asa had been the king of Judah for 27 years. But Zimri ruled in Tirzah for only seven days. At that time, the Israelite army was attacking the city of Gibbethon in the region of Philistia. 16 The soldiers in the Israelite army camp heard that Zimri had plotted against Elah and killed him. Right away, there in the camp, they appointed Omri, the commander of their army, to be the king of Israel instead of Zimri. 17 Then Omri led the entire Israelite army from Gibbethon to Tirzah, and they attacked that city. 18 When Zimri realized that Omri's soldiers had captured the city, he went into his palace and set it on fire. The palace burned down, and he died in the fire. 19 Zimri died that way because he had sinned by doing many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites

were evil. Jeroboam had sinned and led the Israelite people to sin, and Zimri did the same kind of things. **20** The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Zimri did, including how he plotted to kill King Elah.

21 After Zimri died, the Israelite soldiers disagreed about who should be the next king. Many of them wanted Tibni son of Ginath to be the king. But many others wanted Omri to be the king. **22** **The two groups of soldiers fought each other for four years, and finally** the soldiers who supported Omri defeated the ones who supported Tibni. They killed Tibni, and Omri became king. **23** Omri became king when Asa had been the king of Judah for almost 31 years. Omri ruled Israel for 12 years. For the first 6 years he ruled in Tirzah. **24** Then Omni bought the hill that people now call Samaria from a man whose name was Shemer. He paid him about 66 kilograms of silver for it. Then Omri had his workers build a city on that hill. He called the city Samaria because Shemer was the name of the man who had owned the hill previously. **25** Omri did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. He did more evil deeds than any of the kings had done who had ruled Israel before him. **26** Jeroboam had sinned and led the Israelite people to sin, and Omri did the same kind of things. They both encouraged the people to worship worthless idols. This made Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship, very angry. **27** The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Omri did, including the victories that his armies won. **28** Then Omri died, and the Israelites buried him in Samaria. His son Ahab became the next king.

29 Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel when Asa had ruled Judah for almost 38 years. Ahab ruled Israel from the city of Samaria for 22 years. **30** Ahab did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. He did more evil deeds than any of the kings had done who had ruled Israel before him. **31** It would have been bad enough if Ahab had only committed the same kind of sins that Jeroboam did. But he did things that were even worse. He married a woman whose name was Jezebel. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the city of Sidon. **Because Jezebel worshiped the false god Baal,** Ahab started to worship Baal himself, and he even bowed down to Baal **to honor him as his lord**. **32** He built a temple in Samaria where people could worship Baal, and he put an altar in that temple for making sacrifices to Baal. **33** Ahab also made an idol that represented the goddess Asherah. He did more things to make Yahweh angry than any of the previous kings of Israel had done. **34** During the years when

Ahab ruled, a man whose name was Hiel, who came from the city of Bethel, rebuilt the city of Jericho. When Hiel **and his family and servants** started restoring the foundations of the city, his oldest son Abiram died. And they had nearly finished the rebuilding and were putting the doors in the gates of the city, his youngest son Segub died. Joshua son of Nun had said this would happen to the sons of anyone who rebuilt Jericho. Yahweh had led Joshua to say that, and that is exactly what happened.

17 **1** There was a man whose name was Elijah. He came from the city of Tishbe. He was one of the Tishbites who lived in the region of Gilead. One day he went **to Samaria** to speak with King Ahab. He told him, "Yahweh is the God whom we Israelites should worship, and he is the God whom I obey. I swear by Yahweh there will be no dew or rain for the next several years unless I say so." **2** Then Yahweh told Elijah, **3** "**The king is angry with you, so** leave this city of Samaria. Travel east and hide at the Cherith Brook, near the Jordan River. **4** When you get there, you can drink water from the brook. And I will have ravens bring food to you there." **5** So Elijah did what Yahweh commanded him to do. He went and stayed next to the Cherith Brook, near the Jordan River. **6** Every morning and every evening, the ravens brought Elijah bread and meat to eat. He drank water from the brook. **7** But after a while, because it had stopped raining anywhere in Israel, the brook dried up.

8 Then Yahweh told Elijah, **9** "Go and live in the town of Zarephath, which is near the city of Sidon. I have arranged for a widow there to give you food to eat." **10** So Elijah did what God had told him to do. He went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the town, he saw a widow there who was gathering sticks. He said to her, "Would you please bring me a cup of water to drink?" **11** As she was going to get it, he called out to her, "Would you please also bring me something to eat?" **12** But she replied, "I swear by Yahweh your God that I do not have even a single loaf of bread in my house. I have only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I was going to gather a few sticks and then go home and make a fire so that I could cook a meal with them. My son and I would eat that meal, and after that, we would die **from hunger**." **13** But Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid **that you will die**. Go home and do what you said you were going to do. But first, bake me a little loaf of bread from your flour and oil and bring it to me. After that, use what is left to prepare some food for yourself and for your son. **14** You will be able to do that because Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship,

has told me, ‘There will be flour in that jar and olive oil in that jug right up to the time when I make it rain on the earth **and crops grow again**!’” **15** So the woman did exactly what Elijah told her to do. And she and her son and Elijah had enough food every day from then on, **16** because there was always flour in that jar and olive oil in that jug. That was what Yahweh had told Elijah would happen, and that is exactly what happened.

17 Some time later, the son of the woman in whose home Elijah was staying became sick. He kept getting sicker, and finally he died. **18** So the woman went to Elijah and said to him, “I have treated you kindly as a prophet, so you had no reason to let this happen to me. It seems that you came here to make Yahweh more aware of my sins and that he has punished me by causing my son to die!” **19** But Elijah replied, “Give your son to me.” She was holding the boy’s body, but he took his body from her and carried it up to the room where he was staying. He laid the boy’s body on his bed. **20** Then Elijah cried out to Yahweh, “Yahweh my God, this widow has kindly allowed me to stay in her home. It does not seem right that you have caused her this tragedy and allowed her son to die!” **21** Then Elijah stretched himself on top of the boy’s body three times. He cried out to Yahweh, “Yahweh my God, please cause this boy to become alive again!” **22** Yahweh did what Elijah asked him to do. He caused the boy to become alive again. **23** Then Elijah carried the boy down from his room back into the house. He handed him to his mother and said, “Look, your son is alive!” **24** The woman told Elijah, “Now I know for certain that you are a prophet and that when you say a message is from Yahweh, it truly is!”

18 **1** For a long time, almost three years, it did not rain in Israel. Then Yahweh told Elijah: “Go and meet with King Ahab so that I may make it rain again.” **2** So Elijah went to meet with Ahab. By this time, there was almost no food in Samaria for anyone to eat. **3** **As Elijah was approaching,** Ahab summoned one of his officials. His name was Obadiah. He was in charge of the royal palace. (Obadiah greatly revered Yahweh. **4** Queen Jezebel had tried to kill all of Yahweh’s prophets, but Obadiah had hidden 100 of them in two caves. He had put 50 prophets in each cave, and he had brought food and water to them.) **5** Ahab told Obadiah, “I want you to go throughout the country and check every spring and every stream bed to see whether we can find enough grass to feed the horses and mules so that they will not all die. If we can find grass, we will also not have to slaughter all of the cattle.” **6** They agreed to look separately in

different parts of the country. Ahab went in one direction, and Obadiah went in another direction.

7 As Obadiah was walking along, he saw Elijah coming toward him. Obadiah recognized Elijah, and he bowed down respectfully to him. Then he said, "Is it really you, Elijah, my master?" **8** Elijah replied, "Yes, it is. Now go and tell your master Ahab that I am here." **9** Obadiah responded, "I have done nothing wrong to deserve the punishment I would get **if I told Ahab that**! **Because of what would happen next,** he would order his soldiers to kill me! **10** I swear by Yahweh your God that King Ahab sent messengers to the rulers of every kingdom and people group around us to find out whether you were living with them. Every ruler told him, 'Elijah is not here.' Ahab then demanded that the ruler solemnly swear that he was telling the truth**, and each one did**. **11** But now you are telling me, 'Go tell your master that Elijah is here!' **12** I believe that when I leave you, the Spirit of Yahweh will take you away somewhere, and I will not know where he has taken you. So when I tell Ahab that you are here, and he comes here and discovers that you are not here, he will kill me! But **I do not deserve to die, because** I have revered Yahweh ever since I was a boy. **13** Sir, you must have heard about what I did when Jezebel wanted to kill all of Yahweh's prophets. I hid 100 of them in two caves. I put 50 prophets in each cave and brought food and water to them. **14** But even so, you are telling me, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here.' **If I do that and he comes and finds that you are not here,** he will kill me!" **15** But Elijah replied, "I swear by Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, the God whom I serve, that I stay right here where Ahab can find me today."

16 So Obadiah went and told Ahab that Elijah had returned. Ahab came to meet Elijah. **17** When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is it really you, **Elijah,** who have caused so much trouble for the people of Israel?" **18** Elijah replied, "I am not the one who has caused trouble for the people of Israel! You and your family are the ones who have done that! You have refused to obey Yahweh's commands, and you have worshiped idols representing Baal instead. **19** So I want you to command leaders from throughout Israel to meet me at Mount Carmel. I want you to tell the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah to go there also. Your wife Jezebel supports those prophets."

20 So Ahab sent messengers to command leaders from throughout Israel to go to Mount Carmel. He brought all of the prophets of Baal and Asherah there, **and Elijah went there too**.
21 Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, “You must not remain undecided any longer about who is truly God! If Yahweh is God, then you should worship him. If Baal is God, then you should worship him!” But the people said nothing in reply. **22** Then Elijah told them, “I am the only prophet of Yahweh who is still alive here in Israel, but there are 450 prophets of Baal. **23** Now bring two bulls here. The prophets of Baal may choose the one that they want. They may kill it and cut it into pieces, and they may **build an altar and put wood on it and** lay the pieces on the wood. But they must not set the wood on fire. I will kill the other bull and cut it in pieces and lay the pieces on wood **that I will put on an altar that I will make**. But I will not set the wood on fire.” **24** Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “You must pray specifically to Baal as your god, and I will pray specifically to Yahweh.” Then Elijah said to the Israelite leaders, “The God who answers by sending fire **to kindle the wood and burn up the sacrifice that is on his altar** is the true God!” The Israelite leaders agreed to what Elijah proposed.

25 Then Elijah told the prophets of Baal, “You may go first, since there are so many of you. Choose one of the bulls and cut it into pieces. **Make an altar and put wood on it and put the pieces on the wood,** but do not light a fire. Then pray specifically to Baal as your god **and ask him to set the wood on fire**.” **26** So they chose one of the bulls and cut it into pieces. **They built an altar and put wood on it,** and they placed the pieces on the altar. Then they prayed to Baal specifically as their god all through that morning. They shouted, “Baal, answer us!” Then they danced wildly around the altar that they had made. But no one spoke to them from the sky or did anything in response to their prayer. **27** About noontime, Elijah started to make fun of them. He said, “You believe that Baal is a god, so shout more loudly **to get his attention**! Perhaps **he has not answered you because** he is thinking about something else or because he is relieving himself or because he is not home right now. Maybe he is sleeping but will wake up **if you shout loudly enough**.” **28** So they shouted even more loudly. They slashed themselves with swords and spears, as they typically did when they worshiped Baal, until blood covered their bodies. **29** They kept calling out to Baal until the middle of the afternoon, when it would soon be the time when it was customary to make a grain offering. But no one spoke to them from the sky or did anything in response to their prayer or paid any attention to it.

30 Then Elijah called to the people saying, “Come over here!” So they all crowded around
him. There had been an altar to Yahweh there, but people who worshiped Baal had broken it
apart. Elijah repaired it. **31** To do that, he took 12 large stones, one to represent each of the
tribes whose ancestors were the sons of Jacob. Yahweh had told Jacob, “Your name will now
be Israel.” **32** With these stones, Elijah rebuilt Yahweh’s altar. Then he dug a ditch around the
altar that was large enough to hold about 15 liters of grain. **33** Elijah stacked some wood on
top of the stones. He killed the bull and cut it into pieces. Then he laid the pieces on top of the
wood. **34** Then Elijah told the people there, “Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water
on top of the pieces of the bull and the wood.” So they did that. Then he told them, “Do the
same thing again!” So they did it again. Then he told them, “Do it yet again!” So they did it yet
again. **35** The people poured so much water on the altar that it flowed all around the altar and
filled the ditch at the bottom of it. **36** It was now late afternoon, the time when it was
customary to make a grain offering. Elijah walked up to the altar. He prayed, “Yahweh, you are
the God whom our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Israel worshiped. Prove today that you are
the God whom the Israelite people should worship. Also prove that I am your servant and that I
have done all these things because you told me to do them. **37** Yahweh, please give the sign
that I have described and send down fire! Do that so that these people will know that you,
Yahweh, are the only true God and that you are working to make them want to worship you
again!” **38** Immediately Yahweh sent down fire from the sky. The fire burned up the pieces of
meat, the wood, the stones, and the dirt that was around the altar. It even dried up all the water
in the ditch! **39** When the people saw that, they bowed down respectfully. People throughout
the crowd shouted, “Yahweh is the true God!” **40** Then Elijah commanded the people, “Seize
all the prophets of Baal! Do not allow any of them to escape!” So the people seized all the
prophets of Baal. They brought them down the mountain to the Kishon valley, and Elijah had
the people execute them all there.

41 Then Elijah told Ahab, “Go back up onto Mount Carmel where your servants have
provisions for you and get something to eat and drink. But do it quickly, because as a prophet, I
can hear the sound of a heavy downpour, so I know that it will soon rain very hard!” **42** So Ahab
went back up onto Mount Carmel and had something to eat and drink. Elijah himself went up to
the top of Mount Carmel. He bowed down reverently with his face almost to the ground and
prayed that Yahweh would make it rain. **43** Then Elijah told his servant, “Please climb up to a

place where you can look out at the sea and see if any rain clouds are forming." So his servant went and looked. He came back and told Elijah, "There are no clouds forming in the sky above the sea." Elijah kept sending him back to look, for a total of seven times. **44** When the servant went the seventh time, he came back and told Elijah, "I saw a cloud forming above the sea. It was very small, like a person's hand." Then Elijah told him, "Go and tell King Ahab to have his servants get his chariot ready so he can go home right away. If he does not do that, the rain will stop him!" **45** Very soon a strong wind drove in so many black clouds that they made the sky dark. It began to rain very hard. Ahab was rushing in his chariot back to his palace in the city of Jezreel. **46** Yahweh gave extra strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt so that he could run, and he ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel.

19 **1** When Ahab got home, he told his wife Jezebel everything that Elijah had done on Mount Carmel. He told her specifically that Elijah had commanded the people to execute all the prophets of Baal. **2** Then Jezebel sent a messenger to tell Elijah on her behalf, "I am going to have someone kill you by this time tomorrow, just as you killed all those prophets of Baal! If I do not do that, I hope the gods will kill me and do other terrible things to me." **3** When Elijah received her message, he realized he could not stay safely within the kingdom of Israel. So he took his servant with him and fled far to the south to Beersheba in the kingdom of Judah. He left his servant there. **4** Then he walked for a whole day into the desolate area south of Beersheba. He came to a juniper tree and sat down in its shade. Then he prayed that Yahweh would allow him to die. He said, "Yahweh, I cannot endure anymore. So please allow me to die, just as my ancestors died." **5** Then Elijah lay down under that juniper tree and fell asleep. While he was sleeping, an angel tapped him and woke him up and said to him, "You need to get up and eat some food." **6** Elijah looked around and saw some bread nearby that someone had baked on hot stones. He also saw a jar of water. So he ate the bread and drank some water, then he lay down to sleep again. **7** Then the angel representing Yahweh came back and tapped him again to wake him up. The angel said, "You need more strength to go on a long journey, so get up and eat some more food." **8** So Elijah got up and ate more food and drank more water. That made him strong enough to travel for 40 days and nights all the way to Mount Horeb, where God had appeared to the Israelites.

9 He went into a cave there and slept in it. During that night, Yahweh spoke to him and
asked, “Elijah, why are you here?” 10 Elijah replied, “Yahweh, commander of the heavenly
armies, I have desperately wanted the Israelites to worship only you. But they have rejected the
agreement that they made with you. They have torn down your altars, and they have killed
your prophets. I am the only prophet whom they have not killed yet, and they are trying to kill
me, too.” 11 Yahweh told him, “Go out and stand on this mountain where I can meet with you.
I will be coming very soon!” As Yahweh approached, a strong windstorm struck the mountain,
and it loosened rocks **so that they fell down the mountainside**. But Yahweh was not in the wind.
Then there was an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. 12 Then there was a fire,
but Yahweh was not in the fire. Then Elijah heard what sounded like someone whispering
quietly. 13 When Elijah heard that, he covered his face with his cloak. Then he went and stood
at the entrance of the cave. **Yahweh,** the person who had been whispering, asked him, “Elijah,
why are you here?” 14 He replied again, “Yahweh, commander of the heavenly armies, I have
desperately wanted the Israelites to worship only you. But they have rejected the agreement
that they made with you. They have torn down your altars, and they have killed your prophets.
I am the only prophet whom they have not killed yet, and they are trying to kill me, too.”

15 Then Yahweh told him, “Go back the way you came to the wilderness near Damascus.
When you arrive there, pour olive oil on the head of **the royal official** Hazael to appoint him to
be the next king of Aram. 16 I also want you to pour olive oil on the head of Jehu son of
Nimshi to appoint him as the next king of Israel. And I want you to pour olive oil on the head
of Elisha son of Shaphat from city of Abel Meholah to appoint him as a prophet who will
succeed you. 17 Hazael’s soldiers will kill many people. Some people will escape from them,
but Jehu’s soldiers will kill many of those. Some people will even escape from them, but
Elisha will kill them. 18 But no one will kill the 7,000 people in Israel who have never bowed
down to worship Baal or reverently kissed his idol.”

19 So Elijah went **to Abel Meholah** and found Elisha. He was plowing a field with a pair of
oxen. He was also supervising the work of eleven other men who were plowing with pairs of
oxen in the same field. Elijah went over to Elisha. He took off his own coat and put it on Elisha
to show that he wanted Elisha to take his place as a prophet, and then he started to walk away.
20 Elisha left the oxen standing there and ran after Elijah. He told him, “I will go with you, but
I would like to say goodbye to my parents first.” Elijah replied, “Very well, go home and say

goodbye to them. I have not asked you to leave without doing that.” 21 So Elisha left Elijah
and went back home. He killed his oxen and cut them in pieces and used the wood from the
plow to build a fire to boil the meat. He distributed the meat to his family and friends, and they
had a farewell feast. Then he left and went with Elijah and became his helper.

20 1 Later, King Ben Hadad of Aram attacked the city of Samaria. He marched there with
all of his soldiers and horses and chariots. Thirty-two kings who were subject to him brought
their own soldiers. They all surrounded Samaria and began fighting to conquer it. 2 Ben Hadad
sent messengers into the city to speak on his behalf to King Ahab. 3 The messengers told Ahab,
“King Ben Hadad says, ‘You must give to me your silver and gold, as well as your most
beautiful wives and finest children.’” 4 King Ahab responded to Ben Hadad, “I agree to do
what you have demanded. I will give you anything you want, and I will become your subject.”
5 The messengers told that to Ben Hadad, and he sent them back with another message: “I sent
you a message before saying that you had to give me your silver and gold and wives and
children. 6 In addition to that, about this time tomorrow, I will send some of my officials to
search your palace and the houses of your officials. You must allow them to claim anything
valuable of yours and bring it to me.”

7 Then King Ahab summoned all the leaders of Israel. He told them, “It should be obvious
that this man wants to destroy us. He sent me a message insisting that I must give him my
wives and children and silver and gold, and I agreed to do that, but now he is making further
unreasonable demands.” 8 The leaders said to him, “You must not agree to his demands.” The
people who were in Samaria supported what the leaders said. 9 So Ahab told Ben Hadad’s
messengers, “Tell the king that I still agree to give him the things that he first requested. But I
do not agree to what he is now demanding further.” The messengers went back to King Ben
Hadad and told him that. 10 Then Ben Hadad sent messengers back to Ahab. They told him on
his behalf, “We will destroy your city completely. There will not be enough debris left for each
of my soldiers to have a handful of it! If we do not do that, I ask the gods to destroy me
completely and do other terrible things to me!” 11 King Ahab replied to the messengers, “Tell
King Ben Hadad that someone who is putting on his armor in order to fight a battle should not
boast like someone who is taking off his armor because he has won a battle.” 12 Ben Hadad was
drinking wine with his subject kings in their headquarters when the messengers returned and

told him what Ahab had said. He immediately ordered his soldiers to organize an attack against the city, and they marched out to attack it.

13 At that moment, a prophet came to King Ahab and said to him, “Here is a message from Yahweh for you. He says, ‘Do not be at all afraid of the large enemy army that you see! I will enable your army to defeat them today, and you will recognize that I, Yahweh, am the only true God.’” **14** Ahab asked, “Which of our soldiers will defeat them?” The prophet replied, “Yahweh says that the servants whom the district governors brought with them when they came here will defeat them.” The king asked, “Should I wait for the Arameans to attack us, or should I send those men out to attack them first?” The prophet replied, “Send those men out.” **15** So Ahab gathered the servants whom the district governors had brought with them. There were 232 of those young men. Then Ahab counted how many Israelite soldiers were in the city of Samaria. There were only 7,000 of them.

16 Those young mean started to attack at noon, while Ben Hadad and his 32 subject kings were drinking wine in their headquarters. They had already become drunk. **17** When those young soldiers began their attack, Ben Hadad **realized something was happening** and sent some soldiers to find out what it was. They returned and reported to him, “Some soldiers are approaching us from Samaria!” **18** He said, “If they are coming out to negotiate a surrender, take them prisoner. If they are coming out to fight with us, capture them alive.” **19** Those young Israelite soldiers came out of the city **to attack the Aramean army**, and the other soldiers in the Israelite army came out of the city after them. **20** Each of them killed the Aramean soldier who came to fight with him. **When** the rest of the Aramean army **saw that, they** ran away, and the rest of the Israelite army pursued them. King Ben Hadad had to escape by getting on a horse and fleeing with his soldiers who rode horses. **21** Then King Ahab came out of the city **to lead the Israelite army**. He and his soldiers destroyed the enemy horses and chariots, and they won a great victory over the Arameans.

22 Then that same prophet went to King Ahab and told him, “The king of Aram is going to attack you with his army again in the springtime of next year. So you must increase the size of your army and make careful preparations.” **23** **After the Israelites defeated the Aramean army,** Ben Hadad’s officials told him, “The gods that the Israelites worship are gods who live in the hills**, and Samaria is built on a hill**. That is why their soldiers were able to defeat us when we fought them there. But if we fight against them in the plains, we will certainly defeat them

because their gods will not be able to help them there. 24 Here is something further that you should do. You should remove the 32 kings who have been commanding their own soldiers and replace them with trained military officers. 25 Then gather an army as large as the one that the Israelites defeated. Make sure that it has as many horses and chariots as the first army had. Then we will fight the Israelites in the plains, and we will certainly defeat them." Ben Hadad decided that they were right, so he did what they suggested.

26 In the spring of the following year, Ben Hadad gathered his soldiers and marched with them to the city of Aphek to fight against the Israelite army. 27 Then Ahab assembled the Israelite army and gave it food and equipment. The Israelite soldiers marched out to fight the Aramean soldiers, and they set up their tents opposite them. Compared with the great size of the Aramean army, which spread all over the countryside, the Israelite camp seemed like two small flocks of goats. 28 A prophet came to King Ahab and told him, "Here is a message from Yahweh for you. He says, 'The Arameans are saying that I am a god who lives in the hills, and so I will not be able to help you if they fight you in a valley. I am going to prove that they are wrong by enabling your soldiers to defeat their huge army here in this valley. Then you will recognize that I, Yahweh, am the only true God.'" 29 The two armies remained in their camps opposite each other for seven days. Then, on the seventh day, they started fighting. The Israelite army defeated the Arameans, and that day they killed 100,000 of their soldiers. 30 The other Aramean soldiers ran away into the city of Aphek. But the wall of the city collapsed and killed 27,000 more of them. Ben Hadad also escaped into the city and hid in the back room of a house.

31 His officials came to him and said, "We have heard that the kings of Israel act mercifully. So allow us to go to King Ahab and plead for mercy. We will wrap rough cloth around our waists to show humility and ropes on our heads to indicate that we will be his slaves. If we do that, perhaps he will not kill you." 32 The king permitted them to do that, so they wrapped rough cloth around their waists and put ropes on their heads and went to speak with King Ahab. They said to him, "Your subject Ben Hadad begs you not to kill him." Ahab replied, "Is he still alive? He does not need to be my subject, he is my brother, another king like me." 33 Ben Hadad's officials were listening carefully to Ahab, and when he said "brother," they quickly repeated that word. They said, "Yes, your brother, your fellow king Ben Hadad." Ahab said, "Go and bring him to me." So they went and got him, and when Ben Hadad arrived,

Ahab invited him to sit in his chariot with him. **34** Ben Hadad told Ahab, “I will give back to you the Israelite cities that my father’s army captured when your father was king. And I will allow you to set up market areas for your merchants in Damascus, just as my father set up market areas for his merchants in Samaria.” Ahab replied, “If you make a treaty to do those things, I will allow you to go home.” So Ben Hadad made a treaty with Ahab, and Ahab allowed him to go home.

35 There was a man who was part of a group of young prophets in training. He told another young prophet in the group, “Yahweh has told me to have someone hit me hard**and injure me**. So please do that.” But that man refused to hit him. **36** So the first prophet said to him, “Because you refused to do what Yahweh told you to do, as soon as you leave me, a lion will kill you.” And as soon as that man left, a lion suddenly came and killed him. **37** Then the prophet went to another prophet and told him, “Hit me hard, please!” So that man hit him very hard and injured him. **38** Then the prophet went and waited by the side of the road for King Ahab to come by. He put a bandage over his eyes so that the king would recognize him. **39** As the king was going by, the prophet called out to him. He said, “Your Majesty, I was fighting in the battle **against the Arameans, and one of them wounded me so that I could not fight any longer**. So another Israelite soldier brought me an **important** Aramean soldier whom he had captured. He told me, ‘Guard this man! If he escapes by any means, you will deserve to die, and you will have to pay me 33 kilograms of silver to save your life!’ **40** But while I was busy doing other things, the man escaped!” King Ahab said to him, “I judge that you should suffer one of the punishments you described. It is clear from your own testimony that you deserve punishment.” **41** Then the prophet immediately took off the bandage that was covering his eyes, and King Ahab recognized him. He knew that he was one of the prophets. **42** The prophet told him, “Here is a message from Yahweh for you. He says, ‘I wanted you to kill Ben Hadad, but even though he was your prisoner **and you could have done that**, you let him go. As a result, you are going to die instead of him, and many of your people are going to die instead of his people.’” **43** Then King Ahab continued back to Samaria. He was angry and depressed when he got home.

21 **1** King Ahab’s main palace was in the city of Samaria. But he also had a palace in the city of Jezreel. Near that palace there was a vineyard. Naboth the Jezreelite owned that

vineyard. Shortly after he returned from fighting the Arameans, **2** Ahab went to Naboth and
said to him, “Your vineyard is close to my palace. I would like to buy it so that I can use the
land for a vegetable garden. In exchange, I will give you a better vineyard somewhere else, or
if you prefer, I will pay you what your vineyard is worth in silver.” **3** But Naboth replied, “I
inherited that land from my ancestors **and the law of Moses does not allow me to sell it**. Yahweh
would be very displeased with me if I sold that land to you**, so I will not sell it**!” **4** Ahab became
angry and depressed when Naboth told him that he would not sell him the vineyard that he had
inherited from his ancestors. Ahab went home and lay down on his bed. He turned his face
toward the wall, and he refused to eat anything.

5 His wife Jezebel came and asked him, “Why are you so depressed? Why are you
refusing to eat anything?” **6** Ahab replied, “I am depressed and not eating because of what
happened when I spoke with Naboth the Jezreelite. I told him that I wanted his vineyard. I said,
‘I will buy it from you for silver, or I will give you another vineyard in exchange for it.’ But he
told me that he would not let me have it.” **7** Jezebel replied, “You are the king of Israel**, so you
can have whatever you want**! Now get up and eat some food, and do not let what Naboth said
bother you. I will get his vineyard for you.” **8** Then Jezebel wrote letters and signed Ahab’s
name on them **as if he had written them himself**. She used his official seal to seal them. Then she
sent them to the older leaders and other important men who lived with Naboth in Jezreel.
9 This is what she wrote in the letters: “Declare that the people of Jezreel must not eat
anything on a certain day **because someone has committed a crime and it is more important for
the people of the community to investigate that crime than to eat**. Tell the people to gather in the
city square, and have Naboth sit in front of them **as a person whom people have accused of
committing a crime**. **10** Then get two very dishonest men and seat them opposite him **as
witnesses against him**. Tell those men to testify that they heard Naboth cursing God and me,
King Ahab. **Declare that he is guilty, and** take Naboth out of the city and kill him by throwing
stones at him.”

11 The older leaders and other important men of Naboth’s city received the letters, and
they did exactly what Jezebel had told them to do in the letters that she wrote. **12** They
declared that on a certain day, the people of Jezreel should not eat anything. They gathered the
people in the city square and made Naboth sit in front of them. **13** They brought in two very
dishonest men and had them sit opposite Naboth **as witnesses against him**. There in front of the

assembly they claimed that they had heard Naboth curse God and the king. The leaders declared that he was guilty, so the people took him outside the city and killed him by throwing stones at him. 14 Then those leaders sent messengers to Jezebel to tell her, "We have executed Naboth by stoning him." 15 When Jezebel learned that the leaders had executed Naboth by stoning him, she told Ahab, "That man Naboth who refused to sell his vineyard to you is dead. So you can go and take possession of that land." 16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he went right away to the vineyard to claim that he now owned it.

17 Then Yahweh spoke to Elijah the Tishbite. He told him, 18 "I want you to go right away and speak to Ahab, the king of Israel, whose main palace is in Samaria. He is now in Jezreel, and he has gone to the vineyard that belongs to a man whose name is Naboth. He has gone there to claim that he now owns it. 19 Give Ahab this message from me. Tell him that I say, 'I know that you have murdered Naboth and taken his land!' Give him this further message from me. Tell him that I say, 'When Naboth died, dogs came and licked up his blood. You are also going to die, and dogs will lick up your blood in that same place. Yes, this will happen to you!'" 20 So Elijah went to meet with Ahab, and Ahab said to him, "You have caught me, and you are here to avenge the crime I committed." Elijah answered, "Yes, I have caught you, because you are willingly doing things that Yahweh says are wrong. 21 So this is what Yahweh says to you: 'I am going to make something terrible happen to you and your whole family. I am going to destroy all of you. I will allow someone to kill all of the males in your household, whether they are family members or servants, no matter where they live in Israel. 22 I will allow someone to kill your entire family, just as people killed the entire families of Jeroboam son of Nebat and Baasha son of Ahijah. I will do this because you have caused me to become very angry and because you have led the Israelite people to sin.' 23 Yahweh has also told me that your wife Jezebel is going to die and that dogs will eat her body near the outer wall of Jezreel. 24 Dogs will eat the bodies of any members of your household who die in cities. Scavenger birds will eat the bodies of any members of your household who die in the countryside." 25 No other king did things that Yahweh had said were wrong as willingly as Ahab did. His wife Jezebel urged him to do those wrong things. 26 The Amorites who lived in Canaan worshiped idols and lived in very disgusting ways as a result. That is why Yahweh took their land from them and gave it to the Israelites. Ahab did those same disgusting things.

27 When Ahab heard the message from Yahweh that Elijah had spoken, **to show that he was sorry for all the sins that he had committed,**he tore his clothes. He also wore clothes made from rough, uncomfortable cloth, and he did not eat anything. He kept wearing those rough clothes even when he got into bed to sleep. He also walked very quietly. **28** Then Yahweh said to Elijah, **29** "As you are aware, Ahab is acting very humbly now because he wants me to see **that he is sorry for the evil things he has done**. So I am not going to destroy his family while he is still alive. I am going to destroy his family after he dies and his son becomes king."

22 **1** For the next three years, the kingdoms of Aram and Israel did not fight any wars against each other. **2** Then King Jehoshaphat, who ruled Judah, went to visit King Ahab, who ruled Israel. **3** **While they were talking,** Ahab said to his officials, "The city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead really belongs to us, but the Arameans are still occupying it. We ought to do something to recapture that city." **4** Then Ahab turned toward Jehoshaphat and asked, "Will you lead your army and join me as I lead my army to fight to recapture Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied, "Yes, I will lead my army and join you as you lead your army. My soldiers and their horses will fight alongside your soldiers and their horses."

5 Then Jehoshaphat added, "But we should first ask Yahweh whether we should attack Ramoth Gilead." **6** So Ahab summoned his prophets. There were about 400 of them. He asked them, "Should I lead my army to fight to recapture Ramoth Gilead, or should I not do that?" They answered, "Yes, go and attack them, because God will enable your army to recapture the city so that it will belong to you again." **7** But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there still a prophet of Yahweh here whom we could ask about this?" **8** King Ahab replied, "There is still one prophet whom we can ask to tell us what Yahweh says. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him, because whenever he prophesies about me, he never says that anything good will happen to me. He always predicts that bad things will happen to me." Jehoshaphat replied, "I do not feel that you should assume he will do that." **9** So King Ahab told one of his officers to summon Micaiah immediately. **10** Ahab, the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, were both wearing their royal robes. They were each sitting on thrones in an open square just inside one of the gates in the wall of Samaria. Many prophets were standing in front of them and speaking messages that they said were from God. **11** One of those prophets was Zedekiah son of Kenaanah. He used iron to make some horns **like the horns that bulls have**.

Then he proclaimed to Ahab, “Here is a message for you from Yahweh. He says, ‘Your army will keep defeating the Arameans until you have completely destroyed them, just as a bull keeps goring another animal until it has killed it!’” **12** The other prophets who were there said the same thing. They told Ahab, “If you go and attack Ramoth Gilead, you will succeed in conquering it, because Yahweh will enable you to defeat its defenders!”

13 Meanwhile, the messenger who went to summon Micaiah told him, “Listen to me! All the other prophets are predicting that King Ahab will defeat the Arameans with his army. So be sure that you say the same thing and also predict that he will defeat them.” **14** But Micaiah replied, “I swear by Yahweh that I will tell Ahab exactly what Yahweh tells me to say.”
15 When Micaiah came to Ahab, Ahab asked him, “Micaiah, should I lead my army to fight to recapture Ramoth Gilead, or should I not do that?” Micaiah replied, “If you go and attack Ramoth Gilead, you will succeed in conquering it, because Yahweh will enable you to defeat its defenders.” **16** But King Ahab **realized that Micaiah did not really mean what he was saying, so he** told Micaiah, “I have told you many times that you must always speak truthfully when you say what Yahweh has revealed to you about me!” **17** So Micaiah said to him, “**The truth is that in a vision** I saw that the Israelite soldiers had scattered on the hills, the way sheep scatter when they do not have a shepherd. And Yahweh said, ‘Their master is dead. So let them all stop fighting and go home.’” **18** Then Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, “I told you that he never says that anything good will happen to me. He always predicts that bad things will happen to me!”
19 Then Micaiah continued, saying, “Let me tell you what Yahweh showed to me! **In a vision** I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne. The angels of heaven were standing on both sides of him.
20 And Yahweh asked, ‘Who can persuade Ahab to lead his army to attack Ramoth Gilead so that he will die in battle there?’ Some said to do that in one way, while others said to do it in a different way. **21** Finally a spirit came forward and told Yahweh, ‘I will deceive him!’ Yahweh asked him, ‘How will you do that?’ **22** The spirit replied, ‘I will go and inspire all of Ahab’s prophets to tell lies.’ Yahweh said, ‘You will be successful in getting them to tell lies. Go and do that!’ **23** So I am telling you that Yahweh has caused all of your prophets to lie to you. Yahweh has **done that because he has** decided that something terrible is going to happen to you.”

24 Then Zedekiah walked over to Micaiah and slapped him on his face. He said, “You have said something outrageous! Yahweh’s Spirit has not left me in order to speak to you!”

25 Micaiah replied, “You will find out for yourself **to which of us Yahweh’s Spirit has truly spoken** on the day when you hide in the back room of a house!” **26** King Ahab commanded his soldiers, “Seize Micaiah and take him to Amon, the governor of this city, and to my son Joash. **27** Tell them that I am commanding them to put this man in prison and give him only a little food to eat and a little water to drink each day until I return safely from the battle.” **28** Micaiah replied, “If you actually return safely, it will be clear that I was not speaking a message from Yahweh” Then he said to all those who were standing there, “All of you, pay attention to what I have told King Ahab!”

29 So King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah led their armies to attack Ramoth Gilead. **30** King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, “When I lead my army into battle, I will wear different clothes **so that no one will recognize that I am the king of Israel**. But you should wear your royal robes.” So Ahab put on different clothes, and they both led their armies into the battle. **31** The king of Aram had told the 32 men who commanded his chariot forces, “Find the king of Israel and pursue and kill only him. Do not pursue anyone else.” **32** So when the commanders of the Aramean chariot forces saw Jehoshaphat **wearing his royal robes**, they shouted, “There is the king of Israel!” They started chasing him to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat shouted out, **33** they realized that he was not the king of Israel. So they stopped pursuing him. **34** But one Aramean soldier shot an arrow at the Israelite soldiers without aiming at anyone in particular. The arrow struck Ahab where the parts of his armor joined together **and so it went through the armor and into his body**. Ahab told the driver of his chariot, “This arrow has wounded me! So turn the chariot around and get me out of the midst of the fighting!” **35** The Israelites and Arameans fought desperately throughout that day. Ahab’s soldiers helped him keep standing up in his chariot facing the Aramean troops. The blood from his wound ran down onto the floor of the chariot. At the end of the day, he died. **36** Just as the sun was setting, the Israelite troops began shouting to each other, “**Since the king has died, we should stop fighting and** all return home!”

37 After King Ahab died, his soldiers brought his body back to Samaria and buried it there. **38** They washed his chariot at the pool in Samaria, the same pool where the prostitutes of the city bathed. Dogs came and licked up the king’s blood, just as Yahweh had said would happen. **39** The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Ahab did. It describes how he had his workers build a palace for him and

decorate it with much ivory. It also describes the cities that he had his workers build. **40** When Ahab died, his son Ahaziah became the next king.

41 Earlier, when Ahab had been ruling in Israel for four years, Jehoshaphat son of Asa started to rule Judah. **42** Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for 25 years. His mother was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. **43** Jehoshaphat was a good king, just as his father Asa had been. Throughout his life, he did things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were good to do. However, he did not order his servants to destroy the shrines for worship on the top of hills. So the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those shrines. **44** Jehoshaphat also made a peace treaty with the king of Israel.

45 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehoshaphat did. It describes the great things that he did and the victories that his troops won. **46** Jehoshaphat's father Asa had ordered the male prostitutes to leave the kingdom of Judah, but some had not left. Jehoshaphat forced all the remaining ones to leave. **47** At that time, Edom did not have a king. A deputy **whom Jehoshaphat appointed** ruled the Edomites. **48** Jehoshaphat had his workers build at Ezion Geber a fleet of ships that were able to sail out on the sea. He wanted them to sail to Ophir to get gold. But a storm wrecked them there, so the ships never sailed to Ophir. **49** Then Ahaziah son of Ahab suggested to Jehoshaphat, "Allow my sailors to go in the ships with your sailors," but Jehoshaphat refused. **50** When Jehoshaphat died, the Judeans buried him where they had buried his ancestors, in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. His son Jehoram became the next king of Judah.

51 Earlier, Ahaziah son of Ahab had begun to rule Israel from the city of Samaria when Jehoshaphat had been ruling in Judah for 17 years. Ahaziah ruled Israel for two years.
52 Ahaziah did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. He did the same evil things that his father and mother had done. And he did the same evil things that Jeroboam had done. Jeroboam was the king who had led the Israelites to sin by worshiping idols. **53** Ahaziah worshiped Baal and even bowed down to an idol of Baal. That made Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites were supposed to worship, very angry. Ahaziah angered Yahweh just as much as his father Ahab had angered him.

Second Kings

1 **1** After King Ahab died, the Moabites rebelled against Israel. **2** One day, Ahaziah, the new king of Israel, was in his room on an upper floor of his palace in Samaria. The window of that room had wooden slats, and he fell through them **down to the floor below** and hurt himself badly. So he sent for some messengers and commanded them, “Go and ask Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether or not I will recover from this injury.” **3** But an angel representing Yahweh told Elijah the Tishbite, “King Ahaziah has sent some messengers to Ekron to ask Baal Zebub whether he is going to recover. Go and meet those messengers and tell them to tell Ahaziah that he should have consulted God right here in Israel. **4** Yahweh says that you should tell King Ahaziah that because he consulted Baal Zebub instead, he will never **recover from this injury. He will never** get out of bed again. Instead, he is certainly going to die.” So Elijah went to meet the messengers.

5 **After Elijah told them that,** the messengers returned to the king **instead of going to Ekron**. The king asked them, “Why have you come back so quickly?” **6** They replied, “A man came to meet us and told us to go back to the king who sent us and tell him that Yahweh says he should have consulted God right here in Israel. He should not have sent messengers to ask Baal Zebub whether he was going to recover! The man told us to tell you that because you did that, you will never **recover from this injury and** get out of bed again. Instead, you are certainly going to die.” **7** The king asked them, “What did the man look like who met you and told you that?” **8** They replied, “He was wearing a hairy cloak, and he had a wide leather belt around his waist.” The king said, “Then that was Elijah the Tishbite!”

9 Then the king sent an officer with his fifty soldiers to seize Elijah. They **went to look for him and** found him sitting on the top of a hill. The officer shouted up to him, “You prophet, the king commands you to come down here **so that we can bring you to him**!” **10** Elijah replied to the officer, “I am a prophet, as you say. So I command fire to come down from the sky and burn you up along with your fifty soldiers!” Immediately fire came down from the sky and burned up the officer and his fifty soldiers. **11** **When the king found out about that,** he sent

another officer with fifty more soldiers to seize Elijah. They went to where Elijah was, and the officer called out to him, “You prophet, the king commands you to come down immediately!”
12 Elijah replied to the officer, “I am a prophet, as you say. So I command fire to come down from the sky and burn you up along with your fifty soldiers!” Then God sent fire down from the sky, and it burned up that officer and his fifty soldiers. 13 When the king found out about that, he sent yet another officer with fifty more soldiers. They went to where Elijah was, and the officer went up to the top of the hill alone. He bowed down respectfully in front of Elijah. Then he begged him to be merciful. He said, “You prophet, please do not kill me and my fifty soldiers! 14 We know that fire came down from the sky and killed the first two officers and their soldiers. But please do not kill me and my soldiers!” 15 Then the angel representing Yahweh told Elijah, “Go with this man. Do not be afraid of the king.” So Elijah got up and went with the captain and his soldiers to the king. 16 When Elijah arrived, he told the king, “Yahweh says that you should not have sent messengers to go to Ekron to ask Baal Zebub, their god, whether you would recover. You acted as though there was no God in Israel to consult. So you will not recover from this injury. Instead, you will certainly die!”

17 So Ahaziah died, just as Yahweh told Elijah to say would happen. Ahaziah had no son to succeed him as king. So Jehoram, another son of Ahab, became the next king. This happened when Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat had been ruling Judah for almost two years. 18 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Ahaziah did.

2 1 When Yahweh was about to take the prophet Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and his fellow prophet Elisha left the city of Gilgal in the territory of Ephraim, where Elijah had been staying with a community of prophets. 2 Elijah told Elisha, “Yahweh has told me to go to the city of Bethel, but I would like you to stay here.” But Elisha replied, “I am not going to separate from you. I swear by Yahweh and by your own life that I will not do that!” So they went to Bethel together. 3 A group of prophets lived in the city of Bethel. Some of them came out and asked Elisha, “Do you know that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away from you today?” Elisha told them, “Yes, I know that. Please do not say anything further about it.” 4 Then Elijah told Elisha, “Yahweh has told me to go to the city of Jericho, but I would like you to stay here.” But Elisha replied again, “I am not going to separate from you. I swear

by Yahweh and by your own life that I will not do that!" So they went to Jericho together. **5** A group of prophets lived in the city of Jericho. Some of them came up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away from you today?" Elisha told them, "Yes, I know that. Please do not say anything further about it." **6** Then Elijah told Elisha, "Yahweh has told me to go to the Jordan River, but I would like you to stay here." But again Elisha replied, "I am not going to separate from you. I swear by Yahweh and by your own life that I will not do that!" So they continued walking together. **7** Fifty men from the group of prophets who lived in Jericho followed them. They stood where they could watch Elijah and Elisha from a distance as the two of them stopped at the bank of the Jordan River. **8** Then Elijah took off his cloak and rolled it up. He hit the water with it, and path opened up for them through the Jordan River. The ground on this pathway became dry, and that allowed them to walk across to the other side. **9** When they got to the other side, Elijah told Elisha, "Tell me what you would like me to do for you before Yahweh takes me away." Elisha replied, "**Since I am going to be your successor,** I want you to leave me twice as much of your spirit as you leave to any other prophet**, as if I were your firstborn son**." **10** Elijah replied, "You have asked for something that would be difficult for me to make happen. But if you see me when Yahweh takes me from you, then you will get what you have requested. If you do not see me, then you will not get it." **11** They continued to walk **away from the Jordan River**. They were talking together as they walked. Suddenly a fiery chariot that fiery horses were pulling appeared. Its driver drove the chariot between Elijah and Elisha to separate them. Then a whirlwind came and lifted Elijah up into the sky. **12** When Elisha saw this, he cried out, "Oh, my master! You protected Israel so well**, but now you are gone**!" Elijah disappeared into the sky, and Elisha never saw him again. Then Elisha tore his robe into two pieces **to show that he was very sad**. **13** Elijah's cloak had fallen off when the whirlwind lifted him up. Elisha picked up the cloak and walked back to the Jordan River and stood at the water's edge. **14** He rolled up the cloak and struck the water with it. As he did that, he cried out, "If Yahweh, the God of Elijah, is present, may he do for me what he did for Elijah!" A path opened up for him through the water, and Elisha went across.

15 The group of prophets who had come from Jericho saw from a distance what had happened. They exclaimed, "Elisha now has the power that Elijah had!" They walked over to Elisha and bowed down very low in front of him **to show their respect**. **16** Then one of them told him, "Sir, we are concerned that after the Spirit of Yahweh picked up Elijah, he may have

dropped him onto some mountain or into some valley. We would like to send fifty of our strongest men to look for him **on the other side of the river**." Elisha replied, "No, do not send them." **17** But they kept asking, and finally he felt embarrassed **because it appeared that he did not care about Elijah**. So he said, "Very well, send them." So they had fifty men search for three days, but they did not find Elijah. **18** Elisha went back to Jericho to wait for them. When they returned and told him they had not found Elijah, he told them, "I told you that you should not go**, because he was actually in heaven and you would not find him**!"

19 Then the leaders of Jericho came to talk with Elisha. One of them told him, "Sir, you can see that this is a very nice place to live in. But the water is harmful to drink. It is causing the women and female animals that live here to have miscarriages." **20** Elisha told them, "Put some salt in a new bowl and bring it to me." So they did that. **21** Then Elisha went out to the spring from which the people in the town got water. He threw the salt into the spring. Then he said, "Yahweh declares that he has made this water safe. Drinking it will no longer cause the women and female animals here to have miscarriages." **22** And the water became safe, just as Elisha declared it would. Since that time, it has remained pure.

23 Elisha left Jericho and went to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of boys came out from Bethel and started to make fun of him. They kept shouting at him, "Go away, you bald-headed man!" **24** Elisha turned around to look at them. He declared that Yahweh had cursed them. Immediately two female bears came out of the woods and mauled **and killed** 42 of them. **25** Elisha continued past Bethel and went to Mount Carmel. After that, he returned to the city of Samaria.

3 **1** After Jehoshaphat had been ruling Judah for almost 18 years, Jehoram son of Ahab became the king of Israel. He ruled that kingdom from the city of Samaria for 12 years. **2** He did things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. But he did not do as many evil things as his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel had done. He destroyed the stone pillar for worshiping Baal that his father had set up. **3** However, he did not destroy the golden calves that Jeroboam son of Nebat had made. When Jeroboam made those calves, he led the Israelites to sin **by worshiping idols**. Jehoram did not lead the people to stop doing that.

4 Mesha, the king of Moab, raised sheep. Because the king of Israel controlled Moab,
every year Mesha had to give him 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams that had full coats of wool.
5 But after King Ahab died, Mesha rebelled and refused to pay this tribute to the king of Israel.
6 When Mesha rebelled, King Jehoram left the city of Samaria and gathered soldiers from
throughout Israel to reconquer the Moabites. **7** Then he sent messengers to Jehoshaphat, the
king of Judah. They told him on behalf of Jehoram, "The king of Moab has rebelled against
me. Will you lead your army and join me as I lead my army to fight to reconquer Moab?"
Jehoshaphat told them to tell Jehoram, "Yes, I will help you. I will lead my army and join you
as you lead your army. My soldiers and their horses will fight alongside your soldiers and their
horses." **8** Jehoram then sent the messengers back to ask Jehoram, "What route should we take
to attack Moab?" Jehoshaphat told them to tell Jehoram, "We should attack Moab through the
desolate area in the land of Edom." **9** So the kings of Israel and Judah led their armies along
that route. When they got to Edom, the king of Edom joined them with his army. They spent
seven days marching around the southern end of the Sea of the Arabah. By that time, there was
no water left for the soldiers or for the animals they had with them. **10** The king of Israel
exclaimed, "This is a terrible situation! It seems that Yahweh has led us three kings and our
armies here so that the Moabite army can defeat us!" **11** Jehoshaphat said, "We should ask
Yahweh what we should do. Is one of his prophets here?" One of Jehoram's army officers
replied, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He was Elijah's servant." **12** Jehoshaphat said,
"Yahweh will give him a message for us." So those three kings went to speak with Elisha.

13 Elisha told the king of Israel, "You have no right to ask me for help! You worship Baal,
just as your father and mother did, so ask Baal's prophets to help you." But Jehoram replied,
"No, we want you to ask Yahweh because it seems that Yahweh has led us three kings and our
armies here so that the Moabite army can defeat us." **14** Elisha replied, "I serve Yahweh, the
commander of the heavenly armies. I swear by Yahweh that I am only helping you at all
because you have Jehoshaphat king of Judah with you, and I respect him. **15** So bring someone
to me who plays the harp." So they did that, and when the person played the harp, Yahweh gave
Elisha the power to prophesy. **16** He said, "Yahweh is telling you to dig as many ditches as you
can in this valley, **17** because he is going to make it rain too far away for you to see, but the
water from the storm will flow into this valley. As a result, your soldiers, your livestock, and
your pack animals will have plenty of water to drink. **18** Yahweh considers that an easy thing

to do, since he will also do something much greater. He will enable you to defeat the army of Moab. 19 You will conquer every important city in Moab, including those that have high walls around them. You will cut down all their fruit trees. You will stop the water from flowing from their springs. And you will ruin their fertile fields by covering them with rocks." 20 Early the next morning, it was the time when the Israelites customarily offered a grain sacrifice. They suddenly saw water flowing toward them from the direction of Edom. It filled all the ditches they had dug.

21 The people of Moab learned that the three kings had come with their armies to fight against them. So they summoned all of their soldiers, including youths who were just learning to fight. The Moabite soldiers set up a defensive position at the border of their land with Edom. 22 When they got up early the next morning, they looked over to where the other armies were. They saw the sunrise reflecting on the water, and this made the water look red like blood. 23 They exclaimed, "Look, that is blood! Soldiers from those three kingdoms must have fought and killed each other. As a result, the armies must have destroyed each other! So let us go and take their weapons and possessions!" 24 So they went to the area where the soldiers from Israel, Judah, and Edom had set up their tents. But those soldiers attacked the Moabite soldiers and forced them to retreat. The Israelite, Judean, and Edomite soldiers pursued them into the land of Moab. They began attacking the people there. 25 Those soldiers destroyed the Moabite cities. Whenever they passed fertile fields, they threw many rocks onto them. They stopped the water from flowing from the springs. They cut down the fruit trees. Finally the Moabite capital of Kir Hareseth was the only city they had not destroyed. Israelite, Judean, and Edomite soldiers threw stones from slings from places all around the city and killed many of the defenders on its walls. 26 The king of Moab realized that his enemies were defeating him. So he gathered 700 soldiers who fought well with swords. He led them to try to fight their way through to where the king of Edom was leading his soldiers. But they were not able to do that. 27 Then the king of Moab took his oldest son, who would have become the next king after he died, and offered him as a burnt sacrifice. He did this on top of the city wall so people could see it. Then there was great anger against the attacking soldiers, and they left and all went back to their own countries.

4 1 One day the widow of one of the young prophets came to Elisha and pleaded with him. She told him, "My husband, who was one of the prophets you were training, has died. You

know very well that he revered Yahweh greatly. But now someone who lent him money has come and is demanding repayment. I can not pay him back, so he is threatening to take away two of my children as slaves as his payment!" 2 Elisha replied, "What can I do to help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" She replied, "I only have a container of olive oil." 3 Elisha said, "Go out to your neighbors and borrow from them as many empty containers as you can. 4 Bring the containers home. Once you and your children are inside the house, shut the door. Then pour olive oil from your container into the containers you have borrowed. When each one is full, set it aside and start filling another one." 5 So she left Elisha and borrowed as many containers as she could from her neighbors. Then she gathered her children inside her house and shut the door. Her children kept bringing the containers to her, and she kept pouring the oil from her container into them. 6 When she had filled a certain container, her children did not bring her another one. So she called to one of her sons, "Bring me another container!" But he answered, "There are no more containers!" Right then the olive oil stopped flowing. 7 She went to Elisha and told him what had happened. He told her, "Now go and sell the oil. With the money you get, repay what you owe. There will be enough money left over for you to keep buying food for yourself and your children."

8 One day Elisha went to the city of Shunem. There was a wealthy woman who lived there with her husband. That day she insisted that Elisha come to her house for a meal. So he did, and after that, every time Elisha was in Shunem, he went to her house to eat a meal. 9 One day the woman told her husband, "Please listen to me. I am sure that the man who often comes here is a holy prophet. 10 Let us please build a small room for him on our flat roof. Let us put a bed, a table, a chair, and a lampstand in it. If we do that, whenever he comes here, he will have a place to stay." 11 One day Elisha came to Shunem and went up to that room to rest. 12 He told his servant Gehazi, "Tell the Shunamite woman who lives here that I want to speak with her." So Gehazi went to get her. She came and stood just outside Elisha's room. 13 Elisha told Gehazi, "Tell her that we are both grateful for all the kind things that she has done for us. Then ask her what we can do for her. Ask whether she has a complaint that we may bring to the king or the army commander on her behalf." When Gehazi told her that, she replied, "I am living peacefully with my friends and neighbors and have no complaint against any of them." 14 After she left, Elisha asked, "So what we can do for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is now too old to have children." 15 Elisha told Gehazi, "Ask her to come back again." So Gehazi went to get her. She came and stood in front of the open doorway of

Elisha's room. **16** Elisha told her, "By this time next year you will be holding your infant son in your arms." But she protested, "Sir, please do not deceive me by saying things like that. After all, you are a prophet!"

17 But a few months later, the woman became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son at that time the following year, just as Elisha had predicted. **18** As the boy was growing up, one day his father was working with the men who were harvesting his grain. The boy went out to the field to be with his father. **19** Suddenly the boy exclaimed, "My head hurts very badly!" His father told one of his servants, "Carry him home to his mother." **20** So the servant carried him home, and his mother held him on her lap all that morning. But then the boy died. **21** She carried him up to Elisha's room and laid him on the bed. She left him there and went out and closed the door. **22** Then she asked her husband **without telling him that their son had died**, "Please send me one of the servants and a donkey. I want to go quickly to the prophet. I will also come back quickly." **23** Her husband responded, "Why do you want to go to the prophet today? This is not the day when we celebrate the new moon festival, and it is not the Sabbath**, so he will not be leading any religious ceremonies that you can attend**." She replied, "Please just let me go," **and he agreed.** **24** So a servant came and saddled the donkey for her. She told her servant, "Get the donkey moving, and let us go. Do not slow down to make it easier for me to ride unless I tell you to do so!" **25** So they traveled as quickly as they could to Mount Carmel, where Elisha was. When Elisha saw her in the distance, he told Gehazi, "Look, here comes that Shunammite woman!

26 Run to her and ask her if everything is all right with her and her husband and with her child!" **So Gehazi ran to her and asked her,** but she told him that she did not want to stop to answer his questions. **27** When she came to where Elisha was, she bowed down and grasped Elisha's feet **to show that she desperately wanted him to do something for her**. Gehazi came over to push her away, but Elisha told him, "Let her stay here! She is feeling great distress about something, but Yahweh has not told me at all what it is." **28** Then she told Elisha, "Sir, I never asked you to enable me to have a son. In fact, when you told me that I would have a son, I asked you not to deceive me." **29** Then Elisha **realized that something must have happened to her son, so he** told Gehazi, "Tuck your cloak into your belt **so that you can run fast**. Take my staff with you and go to her home. Do not stop to talk to anyone on the way. **Go quickly to where her son is and** lay the staff on the child's face **so that Yahweh may cause him to become**

alive again." 30 But the boy's mother said, "I swear by Yahweh and your own life that I will not leave here and go home until you agree to come with me." So Elisha returned with her to her home. 31 Gehazi hurried quickly to the woman's house ahead of them. When he arrived there, he laid the staff on the boy's face. But he did not say anything, and he did not react when Gehazi spoke to him. So Gehazi went back and met Elisha, who was on his way to Shunem. He told him, "The boy did not become alive again."

32 When Elisha arrived at the house, he found the boy lying dead on the bed in his room where his mother had put him. 33 Elisha went into the room by himself and shut the door. Then he prayed to Yahweh. 34 Then he climbed onto the bed and lay down on top of the boy's body. He put his mouth on the boy's mouth. Then he put his eyes on the boy's eyes. Then he put his hands on the boy's hands. He stretched his body out over the boy's body. After that, the boy's body started to become warm. 35 Elisha went back down to the house and walked around for a while. Then he went back up to the room. He stretched his body out over the boy's body again. The boy sneezed seven times, and then he opened his eyes! 36 Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. He told him, "Call the boy's mother." So Gehazi went and got her, and when she came to the room, Elisha told her, "You may take your son." 37 She came into the room and bowed down low in front of Elisha to honor him and thank him. Then she picked up her son and took him back into her house.

38 Then Elisha returned to Gilgal. At that time, there was a famine in that area. One day many young prophets had gathered to hear Elisha's teaching. He told his servant, "Put a large pot on the fire and make some stew for these men." 39 One of the prophets went outside to look for wild vegetables to add to the stew. He found a wild vine that had many gourds on it. He collected as many as he could hold in the fold of his robe and brought them back. No one there knew that those gourds were poisonous, so he cut them up and added them to the stew. 40 Those who prepared the stew served it to the prophets. But after the prophets had tasted it, they knew something bad was in it, so they cried out, "Sir, there is something in this stew that would kill us if we ate more of it!" So they could not eat it. 41 Elisha said, "Bring me some flour." They brought him some, and he threw it in the pot. Then he said, "Go ahead and serve this. The prophets can now eat it safely." So they ate it, and it did not harm them.

42 One day a man from the city of Baal Shalishah brought Elisha an offering from the first grain he harvested that year. He brought 20 loaves of barley bread and a sack of fresh grain. Elisha told his servant, “Give this food to the group of prophets so that they will have something to eat.” 43 But his servant responded, “I will not be able to feed a hundred prophets with only that much food.” But Elisha replied, “Serve it as a meal to the prophets, because Yahweh says that there will be enough food for everyone. In fact, there will be more than enough!” 44 So he served the food to the prophets. They all ate as much they wanted, and there was more than enough food. That was just what Yahweh had promised would happen.

5 1 A certain man whose name was Naaman was the commander of the Aramean army. Yahweh had enabled him to win many victories for Aram, and so the king of Aram admired and honored him. Naaman was a great warrior. Unfortunately, he also had leprosy. 2 Some groups of Aramean soldiers went on raids into the land of Israel. They captured a young girl and brought her back to Aram. She became a servant of Naaman’s wife. 3 One day that girl told her, “I wish that my master Naaman could go to the prophet who lives in the city of Samaria. That prophet would heal him of his leprosy.” 4 **Naaman’s wife told her husband** what the girl from Israel had said. So Naaman went and reported that to the king. 5 The king told him, “Very well, go right away to the land of Israel. I will write a letter for you to bring to the king of Israel **in which I will ask him to help you**.” So Naaman went to Israel. He brought with him **as a gift** 330 kilograms of silver, 66 kilograms of gold, and 10 sets of expensive clothing. 6 When Naaman arrived, he gave the king of Israel the letter. The king of Aram had written in it, “I am writing this letter to introduce my army commander Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy.” 7 When the king read the letter, he tore his clothes **to show his distress**. He told his officials, “I am not God! I am not able to cause people to live or to die! So this man should not be asking me to cure someone of leprosy. If you think about it, the king of Aram must want a reason to attack us **and he will pretend to be offended if I do not do what he asks**.”

8 The prophet Elisha heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes. So he sent a message to the king. He told him, “You did not need to feel such distress that you tore your clothes. Send Naaman to me. He will learn that there is a prophet in Israel **through whom Yahweh can heal him**.” 9 So Naaman went with his horses and chariots to Elisha’s house, He waited outside the door. 10 But **rather than coming out to speak to Naaman,** Elisha sent a

messenger to tell him, “Go to the Jordan River. Go down into its water seven times to wash yourself. Then your skin will become healthy again. You will no longer have leprosy.” **11** But this made Naaman furious, and he left Elisha’s house. He **stopped and** told his servants, “I expected him to come out of his house and stand in front of me. I was sure that he would ask Yahweh his God to heal me. I expected him to wave his hand over the area where I have leprosy and heal me! **12** Surely the Abanah River and the Pharpar River in Damascus have better water than any river in Israel! The prophet should have told me to wash in those rivers in order to become healthy again!” Naaman was so furious that he started to leave again. **13** But his servants came to him, and one of them said, “Sir, if that prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would certainly have done it. So you should certainly be willing to do a simple thing such as he described when he told you to wash yourself in the Jordan River in order to become clean.” **14** So Naaman went to the Jordan River and went down into its water seven times, as the prophet had instructed him to do. Then his skin became smooth once again, like the skin of a young child. He no longer had leprosy.

15 Then Naaman and the soldiers who were with him returned to Elisha’s house. This time Elisha met with them personally. Naaman told him, “Now I know that the God whom you Israelites worship is the only true God anywhere. Please accept these gifts that I have brought you.” **16** But Elisha replied, “I swear by Yahweh, the God whom I serve, that I will not accept any gifts from you.” Naaman urged him to accept something, but Elisha refused to accept anything. **17** Then Naaman said, “All right, but I have one request. From now on, I am going to offer sacrifices only to Yahweh, not to any other god. So please allow me to take back with me as much soil from Israel as two mules can carry **so that I can spread out that soil to make a place where I can worship Yahweh**. **18** But there is one thing **I will have to do** for which I ask Yahweh to forgive me. When my master, **the king of Aram,** goes into the temple of Rimmon and bows down **to the idol** there, he needs to lean on my arm for support. That requires me to bow down as well**, but I will not intend that as an act of worship**. I ask Yahweh to forgive me for bowing down **to the idol of Rimmon**.” **19** Elisha replied, “**Yahweh will forgive you, so** you may return home without worrying about that.” So Naaman and his servants started to travel home.

20 But then Elisha’s servant Gehazi said **to himself**, “My master Elisha should have accepted the gifts that this Aramean man Naaman brought. I swear by Yahweh that I am going to catch up with him and get something from him.” **21** So Gehazi ran to catch up with

Naaman. When Naaman saw that a man was running after him, he stopped the chariot in which he was riding and climbed down from it in order to speak with the man. When Gehazi arrived, he asked him, “Is everything all right?” **22** Gehazi replied, “Yes, everything is all right. But two young prophets from the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim live have just arrived to stay with Elisha for a while. He wants to give them something. So he sent me to ask you for a disk of 33 kilograms of silver and two sets of clothing.” **23** Naaman replied, “Certainly, and I hope you will accept two silver disks, one for each of those prophets.” Gehazi pretended to be reluctant, but Naaman urged him to accept the second disk, and Gehazi agreed. So Naaman had his servants tie up a silver disk and a set of clothing in each of two bags. He instructed two of his servants to carry these bags back to Elisha, and they walked ahead of Gehazi as they returned. **24** When they arrived at a certain hill in Samaria, Gehazi took the bags from the servants and sent them back to Naaman. He brought the bags into his own house and hid them there. **25** Then he went to Elisha and acted as if nothing had happened. Elisha asked him, “Where did you go, Gehazi?” Gehazi replied, “I did not go anywhere.” **26** Elisha told him, “You must realize that my spirit was there with you when Naaman got out of his chariot to talk with you! This is certainly no time to accept gifts of silver or clothing and sell them to buy olive groves or vineyards or sheep or oxen or male and female servants! **27** Because you have done this, you and all of your future descendants will have leprosy just as Naaman did!” Before Gehazi even left the room, he became a leper. His skin became as white as snow.

6 **1** One day representatives of the group of prophets in Jericho came to Elisha, and one of them said on their behalf, “Listen, our community has grown, so this hall where we meet with you is now too small to hold all of us. **2** Allow us to go to the forest in the Jordan River valley and cut down some trees. Then each of us will carry some of the wood to a site where we can build a new meeting hall.” And Elisha told them, “Very well, you may go and do that.” **3** The one who was speaking on behalf of all of the prophets told Elisha, “Please agree to come with us.” Elisha replied, “Very well, I will come with you.” **4** So they went together to the Jordan River valley. The prophets began cutting down trees. **5** But while one of them was cutting down a tree, the axe head that he had secured to a wooden handle came loose and fell into the water. He cried out to Elisha, “This is terrible! I had to borrow that axe head, and it will be very difficult for me to afford to replace it.” **6** Elisha replied, “Where did the axe head fall into the

water?" The man showed him the place, and then Elisha cut off a stick and threw it into the water at that place. The axe head rose to the surface of the water. **7** Elisha said, "There is your axe head. You can pull it out of the water." And the man reached out and pulled the axe head out of the water.

8 At this time the king of Aram was planning to attack Israel. After discussing various possibilities with his officers, he told them to have his soldiers set up their tents in a certain place. **9** But Elisha sent messengers to tell the king of Israel, "The Aramean soldiers are going to set up their tents there, so stay away from that place." **10** The king of Israel sent soldiers to the place that Elisha had warned him about. **The soldiers discovered that the Arameans were there,** so the king stayed away from there. This happened repeatedly. **11** The king of Aram became very angry about this. He summoned his army officers and told them, "I demand to know which one of you is revealing our plans to the king of Israel!" **12** One of his officers answered, "Your Majesty, it is not any of us. Instead, there is a prophet whose name is Elisha who lives in Israel. He tells the king of Israel even our most secret plans **because Yahweh reveals them to him**." **13** The king of Aram replied, "Go and find out where he is. When you do, I will send some men there to capture him." Someone told him, "We know that he is in the city of Dothan."

14 So the king sent a large group of soldiers to Dothan with their horses and chariots. They came at night **so that no one would know they had come** and surrounded the city **so that no one could escape**. **15** Early the next morning, Elisha's servant got up and went outside the house. He saw that Aramean soldiers with their horses and chariots were surrounding the city. The servant **went back inside the house and** exclaimed to Elisha, "Oh, no! Sir, they have trapped us!" **16** Elisha replied, "Do not be afraid! There are many more soldiers defending us than there are attacking us." **17** Then Elisha prayed, "Yahweh, please enable my servant to see **the spiritual army that is defending us**!" So Yahweh enabled the servant to see spiritual realities. When he looked out, he saw that a great number of fiery horses and chariots were protecting Elisha by surrounding the hill on which people had built the city of Dothan. **18** The Aramean soldiers started to advance toward him. So Elisha prayed, "Yahweh, please make all these soldiers blind!" Yahweh answered his prayer and made them blind. **19** Then Elisha told them, "You have taken the wrong road, and so you have come to the wrong city. Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are searching for." But he led them to the city of Samaria.

20 Once they got inside the city, Elisha prayed, “Yahweh, please enable these soldiers to
see again!” And Yahweh enabled them to see again. When they looked around, they realized
that they were inside Samaria. **21** When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, “Sir,
should I order my soldiers to kill them all?” **22** Elisha replied, “No, do not kill them. If your
army captured enemy soldiers in a battle, you would not kill them. Give these men something
to eat and drink, and then allow them to return to their king.” **23** So the king of Israel told his
servants to serve a big feast to them. Once they had eaten and drunk all they wanted, he sent
them back home. They returned to the king of Aram **and told him what had happened**. So after
that, groups of Aramean soldiers stopped going on raids into the land of Israel.

24 However, some time later, Ben Hadad king of Aram assembled his entire army and led
it to the city of Samaria. His soldiers surrounded the city **and did not let anyone go into or out of
it**. **25** As a result, soon there was almost no food in the city. People were paying nearly a
kilogram of silver for a donkey’s head. They were even paying 55 grams of silver for about a
cup of dove’s dung. **26** One day the king of Israel was walking on top of the city wall. A
woman cried up to him, “Your Majesty, please help me!” **27** He replied, “Yahweh will have to
help you. I certainly can not help you. We have no grain or wine left in the city!” **28** But then
he asked, “What is your problem?” She replied, “Several days ago, that woman over there told
me that **because we had no other food,** I should give up my baby boy so that we could kill and
eat him. She promised that if I agreed to that, we could kill and eat her baby boy the next day.
29 So we **killed my son and** boiled his flesh and ate it. The next day, I told her to give up her
son so that we could kill and eat him. But she hid her son **so that we would not do that**.”
30 When the king heard what the woman said, he tore his robe **to show that he was very upset**.
The people who were standing close to the wall were able to look up and see that the king was
wearing rough cloth underneath his robe **to show Yahweh how sorry he was for his sins and those
of the people**. **31** The king exclaimed, “I am going to order my soldiers to execute Elisha today
by cutting off his head! If I do not do that, may God kill me instead and do other terrible things
to me!”

32 So the king sent a soldier to execute Elisha. Elisha was sitting in his house with some of
the elders of Samaria. Before the soldier arrived, Elisha spoke to the elders. He told them,
“Yahweh has shown me that **the king of Israel,** that violent person, has sent a soldier here to kill
me. Listen, when the soldier arrives, do not open the door. Instead, hold the door shut to keep

him out. The king will be arriving shortly after that soldier." 33 While he was still speaking, the soldier arrived, and the king arrived right after him. The king told Elisha, "Listen, Yahweh has caused us to have this trouble. So I am not going to wait any longer for him to help us."

7 1 Elisha told everyone there, "Listen to what Yahweh says. He says that at this time tomorrow, at the marketplace here in Samaria, you will be able to buy six liters of good flour for about ten grams of silver, and you will be able to buy twelve liters of barley for about ten grams of silver." 2 The officer accompanying the king told Elijah, "That could not happen even if Yahweh opened the windows of the sky and sent grain down to us!" Elisha responded, "Because you have said that, you will see it happen, but you will not eat any of the food!"

3 Now there were four men who had leprosy who were sitting outside the gate of the city of Samaria. They told each other, "We should not stay here until we starve to death. 4 If we go into the city, we will die there, since there is no food there. If we remain sitting here, we will die here. So let us go and surrender to the army of Aram. If they kill us, we will die. But they might give us food. Then we would live." 5 So when it started to get dark, those four men went to the place where the Aramean soldiers had set up their tents. But when they arrived at that place, they discovered that no soldiers were there. 6 What had happened was that Yahweh had caused the army of Aram to hear something that sounded like a large army approaching with chariots and horses. The Aramean soldiers told each other, "Listen! The king of Israel has hired the kings of Egypt and the Hittites to come and attack us with their armies!" 7 The Aramean solders were very afraid that enemy soldiers would kill them if they stayed where they were. So they all ran away, even though it was getting dark. They left their tents and their horses and donkeys behind. In fact, they did not take anything with them from the camp.
8 That was why no one was there when those four men who had leprosy arrived at the place where the soldiers of Aram had set up their tents. So they went into one tent and found food and valuable things in it. So they ate and drank what was there, and they took the silver and gold and clothes. They left that tent and hid those things. Then they came back and went into another tent. They took the things from there, and they went away and hid them as well.

9 But then they told each other, "Something very good has happened today, but we are not telling anyone about it. That is the wrong thing to do at a time like this. If we wait until it gets light in the morning, then other people will discover what has happened, and they will punish us

for not telling anyone. We should go right now and tell the king's officials what has happened!"
10 So they went to the guards at the city gates and called out to them, "We went to where the
army of Aram had set up their tents, but we did not see or hear anyone there. However, their
horses and donkeys were still where they had tied them up, and their tents were still there too."
11 The guards shouted the news, and some people who heard it went to the palace and reported
it to the king's officials. 12 It was still night, but the king got out of bed and told his officials,
"The Arameans are trying to trick us! I will tell you how. They know that we are starving here,
so they have left their camp and are hiding in the fields. They think that we will discover that
the camp is empty and leave the city to get the food they have left in it. Then they will come out of
hiding and capture us and conquer the city!" 13 But one of his officials said, "Please let us send
out some men on five of our horses that are still alive. Those men can go and see what has
actually happened. If the Arameans are hiding in ambush and kill them, they will be no worse off
than the other Israelites who stay here in the city. After all, all of us Israelites here are about to
starve to death." 14 The king agreed to send some men to find out where the army of Aram
actually was. There were enough horses alive to pull two chariots. So the men went out on
those. 15 All along the road, those men found clothing and weapons that the Arameans had
discarded while they were running away. The men went as far as the Jordan River and still saw
no enemy soldiers, so they knew they had left Israel and gone back to Aram. So the men returned
to the king and reported what they had seen.

16 Then many of the people of Samaria left the city and went to where the army of Aram
had set up their tents. They entered all the tents and took everything. The Arameans had left
much grain behind, and as a result, people could buy six liters of good flour for about ten grams
of silver, and they could buy twelve liters of barley for about ten grams of silver. That was
exactly what Yahweh had said would happen. 17 The king appointed the officer who usually
accompanied him to control the flow of people through the city gate. But the people who were
rushing through the gate knocked him over and trampled on him. As a result, he died. That was
just what Elisha had told him would happen when he came to Elisha's house with the king.
18 Elisha had told the king, "At this time tomorrow at the marketplace here in Samaria, you
will be able to buy six liters of good flour for about ten grams of silver. You will be able to buy
twelve liters of barley for about ten grams of silver." 19 The captain had replied, "That could
not happen even if Yahweh opened the windows of the sky and sent grain down to us!" Elisha
had responded, "Because you have said that, you will see it happen, but you will not eat any of

the food!” **20** And that is what happened to him. The people who were rushing through the gate knocked him over and trampled on him. As a result, he died.

8 **1** Several years earlier, Elisha had spoken to the Shunammite woman whose son he had made live again. He had told her, “Yahweh is going to allow a famine to occur in Israel. This famine will last for seven years. So you and your family should go and live somewhere else for a while where there will be food to eat.” **2** The woman had done what Elisha told her to do. She and her family had gone to live in the region of Philistia for seven years. **3** After those seven years were over, she and her family returned to Israel. By this time someone else was living in her house and on her land, so the woman went to the king to ask him to order that person to return her house and her land to her. **4** Just as she arrived, the king was speaking with Gehazi, Elisha’s servant. The king was saying to him, “Tell me about all the miracles that Elisha has done.” **5** Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had caused the woman’s son to become alive again, that woman came in and asked the king to enable her to get her house and land back. Gehazi exclaimed, “Your Majesty, this is the woman I was just telling you about, and this is her son, whom Elisha caused to become alive again!” **6** So the king asked her about this, and she told him the whole story of what Elisha had done. Then the king assigned one of his officials to help her. He told him, “Make sure that this woman gets her house and land back. Also give her as many crops as grew on her land while she was away.”

7 Later Elisha traveled to the city of Damascus. At that time, King Ben Hadad of Aram was very sick. When someone told him that Elisha had come to Damascus, **8** the king told his official Hazael, “Go and speak with Elisha. Bring him a gift from me, and ask him to ask Yahweh if I will recover from this illness.” **9** So Hazael went to speak with Elisha. As a gift, he brought him many of the goods that people produced in Damascus. It took 40 camels to carry everything he brought. When Hazael met with Elisha, he told him, “Your friend Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, has sent me to ask you whether he will recover from his illness.” **10** Elisha told Hazael, “You may go back and tell him that he will surely recover from this illness. However, Yahweh has shown me that he is going to die some other way.” **11** Then Elisha looked steadily at Hazael for a long time. That made Hazael feel embarrassed. Then Elisha started to cry. **12** Hazael asked, “Sir, why are you crying?” Elisha replied, “Because Yahweh has enabled me to know the terrible things that you will do to the people of Israel.

Your soldiers will burn down their cities that now have walls around them. They will kill their best young soldiers in battle. They will throw their babies against stones to kill them. And they will use their swords to split open the bellies of their pregnant women and kill the children in their wombs." 13 Hazael replied, "I am an insignificant person. I do not have the power to do the things you have described." Elisha replied, "Yahweh has revealed to me that you will become the king of Aram." 14 Then Hazael left Elisha and returned to the king. The king asked Hazael, "What did Elisha tell you?" Hazael replied, "He told me that you would surely recover." 15 But the next day, while the king was sleeping, Hazael got a thick cloth and soaked it in water. Then he spread it over the king's face so that he would not be able to breathe. As a result, he died. Then Hazael became the king of Aram instead of Ben Hadad.

16 After Joram son of Ahab had been ruling Israel for almost five years, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat became one of the rulers of Judah. Jehoshaphat continued to be a ruler himself. 17 Jehoram was 32 years old when he became a ruler, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. 18 Jehoram's wife was the daughter of King Ahab. As a result, he behaved just as the kings of Israel behaved who were descendants of Ahab. He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. 19 However, Yahweh had promised his servant David that his descendants would always be kings. So Yahweh did not want to allow the enemies of the kingdom of Judah to destroy it.

20 During the time when Jehoram ruled, the Edomites rebelled against Judah. They appointed their own king. 21 So Joram went with his army and all of his chariots to the city of Zair. The commanders of the Edomite army came and surrounded them with their chariots. Jehoram had to make a surprise attack at nightin order to escape. Then the regular soldiers ran away and went home, so Joram was not able to reconquer Edom. 22 Since that time, Judah has no longer controlled Edom. Around that same time, the people of the city of Libnah also rebelled against Judah. 23 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehoram did. 24 Then Joram died, and the Judeans buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where people had buried his ancestors. Joram's son Ahaziah became the next king.

25 After Joram son of Ahab had been ruling Israel for almost 12 years, Ahaziah son of Jehoram became the king of Judah. 26 Ahaziah was 22 years old when he became the king. He

ruled in Jerusalem for one year. His mother's name was Athaliah. Her father was Ahab, the son of King Omri of Israel. 27 Because Ahaziah's mother was a daughter of Ahab, he behaved just as the kings of Israel behaved who were descendants of Ahab. He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. 28 Ahaziah led his army to join King Jehoram of Israel and his army to fight against the army of King Hazael of Aram. Their armies started fighting at the city of Ramoth Gilead. The Aramean soldiers wounded Jehoram in the battle there. 29 So King Joram left Ramah, where his army had been fighting against the army of King Hazael of Aram. Because the Arameans had wounded him, he went back to the city of Jezreel to recover from his wounds. King Ahaziah of Judah learned that he had gone there to recover. So he went to Jezreel to visit him.

9 1 Meanwhile, the prophet Elisha summoned one of the young prophets he was training. He told him, "Tuck your cloak into your belt so that you can run fast. Go to the city of Ramoth Gilead. Take this jar of olive oil with you. 2 When you arrive there, look for a man whose name is Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi. When you find him, ask him to come with you into a private room, away from his companions. 3 Then pour the olive oil on his head and tell him, 'Yahweh declares that he is appointing you to be the king of Israel.' Then open the door and run away as quickly as you can." 4 So that young prophet went to Ramoth Gilead.
5 When he arrived, he found the officers of the army meeting together in the courtyard of a house. He said, "Sir, I have a message for you." Jehu replied, "Which one of us is the message for?" The young prophet replied, "It is for you, sir." 6 So Jehu got up and went with the young prophet into the house. There the young prophet poured the olive oil on Jehu's head. Then he told him, "Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, declares that he is appointing you to be the king of his Israelite people. 7 Ahab's wife Jezebel murdered many of his prophets and many other Israelites who worshiped him. To punish them for these murders, Yahweh wants you to kill the entire family of Ahab. You formerly served him as a military commander.
8 Everyone in Ahab's family must die. So kill all of the males in his household, whether they are family members or servants, no matter where they live in the kingdom of Israel. 9 Earlier, I had people destroy the families of Jeroboam son of Nebat and Baasha son of Ahijah because those kings were so wicked. I want you to destroy the family of Ahab in the same way. 10 When Jezebel dies, no one will bury her body. Instead, dogs will eat her body on the property near the

city of Jezreel **that belonged to Naboth**." After the young prophet said this, he went out the door and ran away.

11 When Jehu came out of the house to where the other officers were, one of them asked him, "Is everything all right? Why did that crazy person come and speak with you?" Jehu replied, "You know very well what kinds of silly things young prophets like him say." **12** They responded, "No, he must have come to tell you something important. Tell us what he said!" Jehu replied, "All right, this is what he said. He told me that Yahweh said that he was appointing me to be the king of Israel." **13** They had Jehu stand in a high place **where people could see him**. Then they all quickly took off their cloaks and spread them on the ground beneath his feet **to honor him**. They blew on a ram's horn **to show that they were making an important announcement** and shouted, "Jehu is now the king!"

14 Then Jehu and the other commanders made plans to kill Joram so that Jehu could replace him as king. King Joram and his army had been defending Ramoth Gilead against the attacking army of Hazael king of Aram. **15** But the Arameans had wounded Joram as he was fighting against their army. Joram had returned to the city of Jezreel to recover from his wounds. Jehu told the other commanders, "If you really want me to be king, make sure that no one leaves this city to warn the people of Jezreel **that I am planning to go there**."

16 Then Jehu and his officers got into their chariots and rode to Jezreel. That was where Joram was still recovering. King Ahaziah of Judah was there visiting Jehoram.

17 A lookout was standing on top of the tower in Jezreel. He saw Jehu and his men approaching. He called out, "I see a lot of men approaching!" King Jehoram **heard what the watchman said, so he** told his soldiers, "Send someone out on a horse to ask them whether they are coming peacefully." **18** So a man rode out on a horse to meet Jehu. The man told him, "The king asks whether you are coming peacefully." Jehu replied, "I do not have to tell you that. Get into the group of men behind me **and follow me to the city**!" The lookout in the tower **saw this and** reported that the messenger had reached the group of men who were approaching **and had spoken with them,** but he was not coming back ahead of them. **19** So King Jehoram sent another messenger to tell Jehu that he hoped he was coming peacefully. Again Jehu replied, "I do not have to tell you that. Get into the group of men behind me **and follow me to the city**!" **20** Then the watchman reported again, "That messenger also reached them, but he is not

coming back ahead of them. And the leader of that group of men must be Jehu son of Nimshi, because he is driving his chariot so recklessly!”

21 Jehoram told one of his attendants, “Get my chariot ready for me.” So his attendants did that. Then King Jehoram and King Ahaziah each rode out in his own chariot toward Jehu. They met Jehu just as he arrived on the property that had belonged to Naboth. **22** When Jehoram met Jehu, he asked him, “Have you come here peacefully, Jehu?” Jehu replied, “There can be no peace while **you and** your mother Jezebel are leading the Israelites to worship so many false gods and practicing so much witchcraft!” **23** Jehoram cried out, “Ahaziah, Jehu is rebelling against me!” Then Jehoram turned his chariot around and tried to escape. **24** But Jehu got his bow and shot an arrow that hit Jehoram in the back between his shoulder blades. The arrow entered Jehoram’s body and went right through his heart. He slumped down dead in his chariot. **25** Then Jehu told his captain Bidkar, “Take his body and throw it here onto the field that belonged to Naboth. Remember what happened when you and I were riding together behind King Jehoram’s father Ahab. Yahweh spoke about Ahab **through Elijah**. **26** He said that he had seen Ahab murder Naboth and his sons the day before. He solemnly promised that he would punish Ahab right here in this same field! So take Jehoram’s body and throw it onto this field! That will make happen exactly what Yahweh said would happen.”

27 When King Ahaziah saw what happened, he left the property through a pavilion that led into the adjacent palace gardens. But Jehu **and his men** chased him. Jehu told his men, “Shoot him as well!” **So they shot him with arrows** while he was riding in his chariot on the road up to Gur, near the city of Ibleam. Ahaziah continued riding in his chariot until he reached the city of Megiddo, but he died there. **28** His officials brought his body back to Jerusalem in his chariot. The Judeans buried him in the tombs in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That was where they had also buried his ancestors.

29 Ahaziah had become the king of Judah when Joram son of Ahab had been ruling Israel for almost 11 years.

30 Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel the queen mother heard what had happened, she put on eye makeup and combed her hair to make it beautiful. Then she looked out the window of the palace toward the street below. **31** As Jehu was entering the city gate, she called out to him, “Your life will not be peaceful! You will be just like Zimri, who also murdered his

king!” **32** Jehu looked up toward the window and called out, “Will anyone there help me?”
Two or three palace officials looked down at him from windows. **33** Jehu told them, “Throw
her down!” So they threw her down, and Jehu ordered his men to drive their chariots over her
body. **This killed her, and** some of her blood splattered on the city wall and on the horses that
were pulling the chariots. **34** Then Jehu went into the palace and had a meal there. Then he
told some of his men, “Jezebel brought Yahweh’s curse on herself **through the idolatry and
violence she committed**. However, she was a king’s daughter**, and so she should receive a proper
burial**. Please take her body and bury it.” **35** But when they went to get her body to bury it, the
only things left were her skull, her feet, and the front part of her hands. **36** When they reported
this to Jehu, he said, “That is what Yahweh said would happen!” He said through his servant
Elijah that dogs would eat Jezebel’s body on the property that belonged to Naboth. **37** Dung
dissolves into the ground **so that no one recognizes it anymore**. Yahweh said that in the same
way, no one would be able to recognize Jezebel’s body. They would just know that she died
somewhere on Naboth’s property.

10 **1** There were 70 members of King Ahab’s family living in Samaria. Many of the
officials who had served in the royal palace in Jezreel had fled to Samaria after Jehu rebelled.
Jehu wrote a letter and sent copies of it to those officials, to the elders of the city of Samaria,
and to the people who were caring for Ahab’s family. This is what he wrote: **2** “Jehoram’s sons
are there with you**, and ordinarily one of them would succeed him as king**. You are in a city that
has walls around it, and you have chariots, horses, and weapons. So as soon as you receive this
letter, **3** decide which of Jehoram’s sons you think is the most qualified to be the next king of
Israel. Proclaim his as your king, and then prepare to fight to defend him.” **4** But when they
received those letters, what Jehu had written terrified them. They said, “When two kings,
Jehoram and Ahaziah, fought against him, he killed them. We are just ordinary people. So if we
try to fight him, he will certainly kill us.” **5** So the officer in charge of the palace, the mayor of
the city, the elders of the city, and the people who were caring for Ahab’s family wrote back to
Jehu. They told him, “We are willing to be your subjects. We will do whatever you tell us to
do. We will not appoint anyone to become our king. Do whatever you think is best.” **6** So Jehu
wrote back to them and said, “If you accept me as your king and are ready to obey me, kill all
of King Ahab’s male descendants. Cut off their heads and bring them to me here in Jezreel by
this time tomorrow.” Now the leaders of the city of Samaria were rearing 70 male descendants

of King Ahab. 7 When a messenger brought Jehu's letter to the leaders of Samaria and they read it, they killed all 70 of Ahab's male descendants and cut off their heads. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel. 8 A messenger came to Jehu and told him, "They have brought the heads of Ahab's male descendants." Jehu responded, "Put their heads in two piles at the city gate. Leave them there until tomorrow morning." 9 The next morning he went out and stood at the city gate. He told the people who had gathered there, "I am the one who plotted against King Jehoram and killed him. You are not guilty of doing that. And I am not guilty of killing all of these descendants of Ahab. 10 Instead, Yahweh has done what he said through his servant Elijah that he would do. As a result, you can be sure that everything Yahweh said would happen to Ahab's family has in fact happened." 11 Then Jehu executed all the other relatives of Ahab in Jezreel. He also executed all of Ahab's officers, close friends, and priests. He did not allow any of them to remain alive.

12 Then Jehu left Jezreel and went toward Samaria. On his way there, he came to Beth Eked of the Shepherds. 13 There he met some relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah. He asked them, "Who are you?" They replied, "We are relatives of King Ahaziah. We are going to Jezreel to visit the family of **Ahaziah's cousin** King Jehoram, including the other children of his mother Jezebel." 14 Jehu told his men, "Seize them!" So they seized them, and they killed all of them at the pit of Beth Eked. They killed all 42 of the relatives of Ahaziah whom they met. They did not allow any of them to remain alive.

15 Then Jehu continued to travel toward Samaria. He met Jehonadab son of Rechab, who was coming to join him. Jehu greeted him and told him, "I am willing to work with you. Are you willing to work with me?" Jehonadab replied, "Yes, I am." Jehu said, "If you are, then let us shake hands." So they shook hands. Then Jehu helped him to get into his chariot. 16 Jehu told him, "Come with me and let me show you how eager I am for the Israelites to worship Yahweh." So Jehu's men arranged for Jehonadab to ride with Jehu in his chariot **to Samaria**.
17 When they arrived in Samaria, Jehu killed all of Ahab's relatives who were still alive there. He did not spare any of them. That was exactly what Yahweh had told Elijah would happen to Ahab's family.

18 Then Jehu gathered the people of Samaria and told them, "I am going to worship Baal much more than King Ahab did. 19 So now summon all of Baal's prophets and priests and all

the other Israelites who worship Baal. I am going to offer a great sacrifice to Baal, and I want all of them to be there. I will have my soldiers execute any of them who do not come to the sacrifice." But Jehu was deceiving them. He was planning to kill everyone who worshiped Baal. **20** Then Jehu commanded, "Announce that we are going to set aside a day to honor Baal." So his messengers went out and proclaimed that there would be a celebration on that day. **21** Jehu sent messengers throughout Israel telling the people who worshiped Baal to gather in Samaria on a certain day. All those people came that day. They went into the huge temple of Baal and filled it from one side to the other. **22** Then Jehu spoke to the person who took care of the sacred robes in Baal's temple. He told him to bring out enough robes so that everyone who worshiped Baal would have one to wear. So the person did that. **23** Then Jehu went into the temple of Baal with Jonadab. He told the people who were worshipers of Baal, "Look around and make sure that no one who worships Yahweh has come in. Only people who worship Baal should be here." **24** Then he and Jonadab prepared to offer **fellowship** sacrifices and burnt offerings to Baal. But Jehu had stationed 80 of his men outside the temple. He had told them, "I want you to kill all the people who are in this temple. I will have my soldiers execute any of you who allows any of them to escape!"

25 As soon as he had finished making the burnt offerings, Jehu gave an order to the guards and officers he had stationed outside. He told them, "Go in to the temple and kill the worshipers of Baal! Do not allow any of them to escape!" So the guards and officers went in and killed every one of them. Then they dragged their bodies outside the temple. Then they went into the inner room of the temple **26** and got the sacred images of Baal that were there. They brought them out of the temple and burned them. **27** They also smashed the large stone pillar outside the temple that represented Baal. Then they tore down the temple. People then used it for a bathroom, and people continued to do that afterwards. **28** That is how Jehu ended the worship of Baal in Israel.

29 The one form of idolatry that Jehu allowed to continue was the worship of the golden statues of calves in the cities of Bethel and Dan. King Jeroboam had sinned by making those statues, and he led the people of Israel to sin by worshiping them. **30** Then Yahweh told Jehu, "I wanted someone to destroy Ahab's descendants, and you did that. Because you obeyed me and did what I had decided was proper, I promise that your son, grandson, great-grandson, and great-great-grandson will all be kings of Israel." **31** But Jehu did not carefully and completely

obey the laws of Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship. He did not stop committing the sins that Jeroboam had committed, which he had also led the Israelite people to commit.

32 At that time, Yahweh began to allow enemies to conquer some of the territory of Israel. The army of King Hazael of Aram conquered much of the Israelite territory **33** east of the Jordan River. That was the region of Gilead, where the tribes of Gad and Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh lived. Hazael conquered territory as far south as the city of Aroer by the Arnon Valley. He conquered further territory in Gilead as far north as Bashan. **34** The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehu did, including the victories that his armies won. **35** Then Jehu died, and the Israelites buried him in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz became the next king. **36** Jehu had ruled in Samaria as the king of Israel for 28 years.

11 **1** Someone told King Ahaziah's mother Athaliah that Jehu had killed her son. She ordered soldiers to kill all the members of Ahaziah's family who might become the next king. **2** But Jehosheba, who was King Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's half-sister, rescued Ahaziah's very young son Joash. She hid him and his nursemaid in a room in the palace where people kept bedding supplies. So the soldiers whom Athaliah had sent did not kill him when they killed the rest of Ahaziah's sons. **3** For the next six years, the priests hid Joash in Yahweh's temple with Jehosheba. Meanwhile, Athaliah ruled Judah.

4 But after those six years, Jehoiada **the high priest** sent messengers to get the officers who commanded the royal bodyguards and the palace guards. He told them to come to him at the temple. He had them make a solemn agreement with him **that they would do what he told them to do**. They swore an oath **by Yahweh** in his temple **that they would do this**. Then he showed them Joash, the son of King Ahaziah. **5** He gave them these instructions. "Many of you guards will come on duty on the Sabbath day. When you do, divide yourselves into three groups. One group must guard the palace building. **6** Another group must guard the Sur Gate. The other group must guard the gate where the palace guards usually stand. This will keep anyone from leaving the palace area. **7** Many others of you guards will be going off duty on the Sabbath day. **Instead of leaving,** you must guard the temple in two groups to protect young King Joash. **8** You must arm yourselves with your weapons and stand all around the king **to protect him**.

Kill anyone who approaches your ranks to try to harm the king. If he goes anywhere, go with him."

9 The officers who commanded the guards did exactly what Jehoiada told them to do. Each one brought to Jehoiada the guards whom he commanded. This included the guards who were just finishing their work and those who were about to start their work on the Sabbath day.
10 Some spears and shields that had belonged to King David were in the temple. Jehoiada distributed them to the commanders of the guards to give to their men. **11** The guards took those weapons and formed a line all across the front of the temple. They stood between the temple building and the altar in its courtyard. In that way they provided complete protection for the king. **12** Then Jehoiada the high priest brought Joash out of the temple. He put a crown on his head and gave him a scroll that recorded Yahweh's laws. Then he poured olive oil on Joash's head and proclaimed that he was now the king. The people clapped their hands and shouted, "May King Joash rule for a long time!"

13 Athaliah heard the noise that the guards and the other people were making. So she came to the temple where the people had gathered. **14** She saw Joash, the new king, standing next to one of the big pillars on the temple porch. That was where new kings customarily stood. She saw that the commanders of the palace guards and musicians playing trumpets were standing next to him. She heard a crowd of ordinary Israelites shouting joyfully. Some of them were blowing trumpets. She tore her clothes to show her distress and shouted, "You are traitors! You have betrayed me!" **15** Jehoiada told the officers who commanded the guards, whom he had put in charge of the armed men that day, "Have the guards take her away from the temple. Kill anyone who tries to rescue her!" He said that because he did not want his men to kill her near Yahweh's temple. **16** The guards formed two lines so that she could walk safely between them back to the palace. She walked through the entrance that horses used to get into the palace courtyard. The guards killed her there.

17 Then Jehoiada had King Joash and the people make a solemn agreement with Yahweh that they would always be loyal to him as their God. He also had the people make a solemn agreement with Joash that they would be loyal to him as their king. **18** Then the large crowd of Israelites who had gathered went to the temple of Baal. They destroyed the main altar and smashed the statues of Baal into pieces. They also killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, right in front of the other altars in the temple. Jehoiada then stationed guards at the temple of Yahweh.

19 Then Jehoiada, the officers who commanded the guards, the royal bodyguards, and the
palace guards brought the king from the temple to the palace. All the people who had gathered
there followed them. Joash entered the palace at the gate where the palace guards usually
stood. He sat down on the same throne where the previous kings of Judah had sat. 20 The
Judeans were glad that the guards had killed Athaliah at the palace. The city of Jerusalem
became peaceful after she died.

21 Joash was seven years old when he became the king of Judah.

12 1 When Jehu had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, Joash became the king of
Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for 40 years. His mother was Zibiah. She was from the city of
Beersheba. 2 Jehoiada the priest instructed him. As a result, throughout his life, Joash did
things that pleased Yahweh. 3 However, Joash did not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills.
The Judeans continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places **instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem**.

4 Joash told the priests, "People give money to Yahweh's temple for several reasons. The
law requires them to give some money to support the temple. Sometimes people dedicate
people or animals to Yahweh and redeem them with money. And sometimes people just want to
give money to the temple. 5 Each priest must take the money from the people who come to
him, and he must use that money to pay for the repair of any damages that he discovers in the
temple." 6 But after Joash had been ruling for almost 23 years, the priests still had not made
repairs in the temple. 7 So Joash summoned Jehoiada and the other priests and told them, "I
told you that when people gave money for various reasons, you should use it to make repairs to
the temple. But you have not been doing that. So do not collect that money any longer. Instead,
use it to pay workers to make the repairs." 8 The priests agreed that they would no longer
collect that money or do the repair work.

9 Then Jehoiada took a chest and made a hole in its top. He put the box on the right side of
the altar **in the temple courtyard**. Often people **gave some money for the temple** when they came
to the temple courtyard. **When they did,** the priests who supervised the courtyard entrance put
that money in the box. 10 Whenever the priests realized that there was a lot of money in the
chest, they would ask the king's secretary and the high priest to come and collect it. The

secretary and priest took the money out of the chest and tied it up in bags. Then they weighed the bags to determine the value of this silver that people had given to the temple. **11** Then they would distribute the money to the men who supervised the work in the temple. The supervisors would use that money to pay the carpenters and builders who did the repair work in the temple. **12** They also used the money to pay masons and stone cutters and to buy timber and stones that workers had shaped. They used the timer and stone to repair damages in the temple. They also used the money to pay for all the other expenses of the repair work. **13** But they did not use any of that money to pay for silver cups or wick trimmers or bowls or trumpets or any other silver or gold items that the priests would use in the temple. **14** Instead, the supervisors gave all of that money to the men who were doing the work of repairing the temple. **15** The men who supervised the work acted honestly. So when the king's secretary and the high priest gave them money to pay the workers, they never required them to report how they had spent that money. **16** Sometimes people gave money to the priests who offered the animals that they brought as sacrifices for guilt or sin. That money belonged to the priests, so the supervisors did not use it to repair the temple.

17 Later, Hazael king of Aram led his army to attack the city of Gath. They conquered it. Then he decided to lead his army to attack Jerusalem. **18** So King Joash of Judah got all of the gold and silver items that the previous kings, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, had dedicated to Yahweh. He also got the gold and silver items that he had dedicated. He also got all of the gold that was in the storerooms of the temple and his palace. He sent this treasure to King Hazael **to persuade him to stop attacking Jerusalem**. So King Hazael led his army away from Jerusalem.

19 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Joash did. **20** Joash's officials plotted against him, and two of them ambushed him in Beth Millo, on the road that goes down to the district of Silla. **21** The two officials who ambushed Joash were Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer. They killed him. The Judeans buried Joash in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where people had also buried his ancestors. Then Joash's son Amaziah became the next king of Judah.

13 1 After Joash had been ruling Judah for almost 23 years, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became
the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for 17 years. 2 Jehoahaz did many things that
Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned by making calf
idols, and he made the people of Israel sin by worshiping those idols. Jehoahaz sinned in that
same way, and he did not repent. 3 Yahweh became very angry with the Israelite people. So he
allowed the armies of King Hazael of Aram and his son Ben Hadad to defeat the Israelites
many times. 4 The Arameans were treating the Israelites very badly. So Jehoahaz prayed to
Yahweh for help. Yahweh saw how badly the Arameans were treating the Israelites, so he did
give Jehoahaz the help he asked for. 5 Yahweh sent a leader to Israel who rescued them from
the control of the Aramean king. After that, the Israelites lived peacefully as they had done
previously. 6 But even after that, the Israelites continued to commit the same kind of sins that
Jeroboam and his descendants committed. Jeroboam had led the people of Israel to sin by
worshiping idols, and they continued to sin in that way. Also, the pole that people used in the
worship of the goddess Asherah remained in Samaria. 7 The Aramean army killed so many of
Jehoahaz's soldiers that he had only 50 men left who rode on horses. He had only 10 chariots
and 10,000 other soldiers left. The Arameans were so powerful compared to the Israelites that
it was as if they could knock them down and walk over them. 8 The book in which the kings
of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehoahaz did,
including the battles that he fought. 9 Jehoahaz died, and the Israelites buried him in Samaria.
Then his son Joash became the next king.

10 Jehoash son of Jehoahaz started to rule in Israel after King Joash had been ruling in
Judah for 37 years. Jehoash ruled in Samaria for 16 years. 11 He did many things that Yahweh
had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned by making calf idols, and he
made the people of Israel sin by worshiping those idols. Jehoash sinned in that same way, and he
did not repent. 12 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their
reigns describes further things that Joash did, including the victory that his army won against
the army of King Amaziah of Judah. 13 When Joash died, the Israelites buried him in Samaria.
That was where they had buried other kings of Israel. His son Jeroboam became the next king.

14 Then Elisha became very ill. Just before he died, King Joash went to Elisha and cried
because he was so sad that he was going to die. He cried out, "Sir, you protected Israel so well,

but now you are going to die!" 15 Elisha told him, "Bring me a bow and some arrows." So the king did that. 16 Then Elisha told the king to hold the bow in his left hand and the bowstring in his right hand. So the king did that. Elisha then put his own hands on top of the king's hands. 17 Then Elisha told him, "Have someone open that window through which we can look to the east." So a servant opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot an arrow toward the east!" So the king did that. Then Elisha told him, "That arrow represents how Yahweh will enable you to defeat the Aramean army. Your army will completely defeat them at the city of Aphek." 18 Then Elisha told him, "Pick up the other arrows." So he picked up the arrows. Then Elisha told the king, "Hit the ground with them!" So he hit the ground with them. But he only did that three times. 19 This made Elisha angry with him. He exclaimed, "You should have struck the ground five or six times! If you had done that, your army would have completely destroyed the Aramean army in a series of battles. Instead, your army is only going to win three battles against them."

20 Then Elisha died, and the Israelites buried him. At that time groups of raiders from Moab were coming into Israel each year during the spring. 21 Around that time, while some Israelites were carrying a man's body to where they wanted to bury him, they saw a group of those raiders. They were afraid, so they quickly threw that man's body into the same tomb where Elisha's body was and ran away. But as soon as the man's body touched Elisha's body, the dead man became alive again and stood up!

22 King Hazael of Aram had treated the Israelite people badly throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. 23 But Yahweh felt sorry for the Israelite people, so he treated them better than they deserved. He helped them because of the solemn agreement he had made with their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He wanted them to continue being a nation. So he still did not allow enemies to take the Israelites away from their land. 24 When Hazael died, his son Ben Hadad became the next king of Aram. 25 Ben Hadad son of Hazael had fought and defeated Jehoash's father Jehoahaz. He had captured several cities. But Joash defeated Ben Hadad three times. In that way, he recaptured those cities and made them part of Israel again.

14 1 After Jehoash son of Jehoahaz had been ruling Israel for almost two years, Amaziah son of Joash became the king of Judah. 2 He was 24 years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for 29 years. His mother was Jehoaddin. She was from the city of

Jerusalem. 3 Amaziah did many things that pleased Yahweh, but not to the extent that King David, his ancestor, had done. He did the same kind of good things that his father Joash had done. 4 However, Amaziah did not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills. The Judeans continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places **instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem**. 5 As soon as Amaziah was completely in control of his kingdom, he had his soldiers execute the officials who had murdered his father, King Joash. 6 But he did not tell his servants to execute those officials' children. He obeyed what Moses wrote in the book of laws that Yahweh gave him. He wrote, "You must not execute parents for crimes that their children commit, and you must not execute children for crimes that their parents commit. You must only execute people for the sins that they themselves commit." 7 Amaziah led his army and defeated the Edomite army in the Valley of Salt. The Judeans killed 10,000 Edomites. They captured the city of Sela. Amaziah gave that city a new name, Joktheel, and that is still its name.

8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to King Jehoash of Israel to tell him, "I challenge you to a battle!" 9 But in reply, King Jehoash had his messengers tell King Amaziah a story that taught a lesson. They said, "Once a little thornbush was growing in the mountains in Lebanon. It sent a message to a great cedar tree. It told the cedar that it should allow the son of the thornbush to marry its daughter. But as a wild animal in Lebanon was walking along, it stepped on the thornbush and crushed it." 10 **The messengers continued to say on behalf of Jehoash,** "The meaning of my story is that you have become very proud because your army defeated the army of Edom. But you should be happy about that and not fight a further war with me. If you cause trouble by fighting against me, you will surely cause great harm to happen to you and to your people."

11 But Amaziah did not withdraw his challenge. So Jehoash led his army to fight against the army of Amaziah. They fought a battle at the city of Beth Shemesh in Judah. 12 The Israelite army defeated the army of Judah, and the Judean soldiers ran away and went home. 13 Jehoash's army captured King Amaziah at Beth Shemesh. Then they marched to Jerusalem and tore down the wall around the city from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. That section of the wall was about 180 meters long. 14 Jehoash's soldiers seized all the gold and silver and valuable items that were in Yahweh's temple and that Amaziah was keeping in the royal palace.

They also took some prisoners to make sure that Amaziah would not attack Israel. Then Jehoash returned to Samaria.

15 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehoash did, including more about how he and his army fought and defeated the army of King Amaziah of Judah. **16** When Jehoash died, the Israelites buried him in Samaria. That was where they had buried other kings of Israel. His son Jeroboam became the next king.

17 King Amaziah of Judah lived for 15 more years after King Jehoash of Israel died. **18** The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Amaziah did. **19** Some people in Jerusalem plotted against Amaziah, so he ran away to the city of Lachish. But those people sent men to follow him to Lachish, and those men killed him there. **20** **To honor him,** his officials brought his body back to Jerusalem in his own chariot. They buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That was where people had also buried his ancestors. **21** Then the Judeans appointed Amaziah's son Azariah as the next king. He became king when he was 16 years old. **22** After his father Amaziah died, Azariah led his army to recapture the city of Elath. He then fortified that city.

23 When Amaziah son of Joash had been ruling Judah for almost 15 years, Jeroboam son of Jehoash became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for 41 years. **24** He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned **by making calf idols**, and he made the people of Israel sin **by worshiping those idols**. This Jeroboam **sinned in that same way, and he** did not repent. **25** Jeroboam led his soldiers to reconquer much of the territory that the Israelites had previously controlled, from Lebo Hamath **in the north** to the Sea of the Arabah in the south. That is exactly what Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship, promised would happen. He said that in a message he gave to the prophet Jonah son of Amittai, who came from the city of Gath Hepher. **26** Yahweh made that promise and kept it because he saw that the Israelites' enemies were causing them to suffer greatly. He also saw that no one at all was able to rescue them. **27** But Yahweh had not said that he would destroy the Israelites completely. So he enabled King Jeroboam to rescue them.

28 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Jeroboam did. He was a strong king. He led his armies to
recapture the territories in the areas of Damascus and Hamath that Judean kings had formerly
controlled. He made them part of his kingdom of Israel. 29 When Jeroboam died, the Israelites
buried him in Samaria. That was where they had buried other kings of Israel. His son Zechariah
became the next king.

15 1 After Jeroboam had been ruling Israel for almost 27 years, Azariah, the son of King
Amaziah, began to rule Judah. 2 He was 16 years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in
Jerusalem for 52 years. His mother was Jecoliah. She was from the city of Jerusalem. 3 He did
things that pleased Yahweh. He did the same good things that his father Amaziah had done.
4 However, Azariah did not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills. The Judeans continued to
offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places instead of at the place that God had chosen for
them in Jerusalem. 5 Azariah committed a serious sin, and Yahweh punished him by causing
him to become a leper. Azariah remained a leper for the rest of his life. He had to live in a
house away from other people. His son Jotham was in charge of the royal palace and decided
cases that Judeans brought to him. 6 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what
happened during their reigns describes further things that Azariah did. 7 When Azariah died,
the Judeans buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is
where people had also buried his ancestors. Ahaziah's son Jotham became the next king.

8 After Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost 38 years, Zechariah son of Jeroboam
became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for six months. 9 He did many
things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. That is what his ancestors who were kings
of Israel had done. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned by making calf idols, and he made the
people of Israel sin by worshiping those idols. Zechariah sinned in that same way, and he did not
repent. 10 Then Shallum son of Jabesh plotted against Zechariah. He assassinated him right in
public. Then he became the next king. 11 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what
happened during their reigns describes further things that Zechariah did. 12 Yahweh had told
Jehu that his son, grandson, great-grandson, and great-great-grandson would all be kings of
Israel. And that is exactly what happened.

13 After Amaziah had been ruling Judah for almost 39 years, Shallum son of Jabesh
became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for one month. **14** Then Menahem son of Gadi
came from the city of Tirzah to Samaria and assassinated Shallum. Then Menahem became the
next king. **15** The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their
reigns describes further things that Shallum did, including how he plotted against King
Zechariah. **16** After he became king, Menahem led his soldiers from Tirzah to the city of
Tiphsah. They destroyed the city and killed the people who lived in it and near it. His soldiers
even used their swords to split open the bellies of the pregnant women in the city **and kill the
children in their wombs**. They did that because **those people had not wanted Menahem to be their
king, so they** had not allowed him to come into their city. **17** When Azariah had been ruling
Judah for almost 39 years, Menahem son of Gadi became the king of Israel. He ruled in
Samaria for ten years. **18** Menahem did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were
evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned **by making calf idols**, and he made the people of Israel
sin **by worshiping those idols**. Menahem **sinned in that same way, and he** did not ever repent.
19 Then King Pul of Assyria led his army to invade Israel. Menahem gave him about 33 metric
tons of silver so that he would be his ally and help him rule Israel more powerfully.
20 Menahem obtained that money from the rich men in Israel. He compelled each of them to
contribute three fifths of a kilogram of silver. When Pul received that money, he ended his
invasion and returned to Assyria. **21** The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what
happened during their reigns describes further things that Menahem did. **22** After Menahem
died, his son Pekahiah became the next king of Israel.

23 When Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost 50 years, Pekahiah son of Menahem
became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for two years. **24** Pekahiah did many things that
Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned **by making calf
idols**, and he made the people of Israel sin **by worshiping those idols**. Pekahiah **sinned in that
same way, and he** did not repent. **25** One of Pekahiah's military officers, Pekah son of
Remaliah, plotted against him. Together with 50 men from the region of Gilead, he went to the
fortress in the king's palace in Samaria. There they assassinated Pekahiah and two of his
officials, Argob and Arieh. Then Pekah became the next king. **26** The book in which the kings
of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Pekahiah did.

27 When Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost 52 years, Pekah son of Remaliah became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for 20 years. **28** Pekah did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned **by making calf idols**, and he made the people of Israel sin **by worshiping those idols**. Pekah **sinned in that same way, and he** did not repent.

29 While Pekah was the king of Israel, King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria led his army to invade the country. They captured the cities of Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. Those cities were in the parts of the regions of Gilead and Galilee that belonged to the tribe of Naphtali. Tiglath Pileser forced the Israelite people who had lived in those places to go to live in Assyria. **30** Then Hoshea son of Elah, plotted against Pekah. He assassinated him when Jotham son of Uzziah had been ruling Judah for almost 20 years. Then Hoshea became the next king of Israel. **31** The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Pekah did.

32 When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost two years, Jotham son of Azariah began to rule Judah. **33** Jotham was 25 years old when he started to rule, and he ruled from Jerusalem for 16 years. His mother was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. **34** He did many things that pleased Yahweh, just as his father Uzziah had done. **35** However, Jotham did not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills. The Judeans continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places **instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem**. Jotham had his workers build the upper gate of the temple courtyard. **36** The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jotham did. **37** During the reign of Jotham, Yahweh prompted King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel to start planning to attack Judah. **38** When Jotham died, the Judeans buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where people had buried his ancestors. Jotham's son Ahaz became the next king.

16 **1** When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost 17 years, Ahaz son of Jotham became the king of Judah. **2** Ahaz was 20 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for 16 years. He did not do things that pleased Yahweh, the God he should have worshiped, the way his ancestor King David had done. **3** Instead, he behaved in the same

sinful way that the kings of Israel behaved. He even burned up his son as an offering to an idol. That was one of the disgusting things that the people groups who had previously lived in the land of Canaan had done. Yahweh drove those people out so that the Israelites could settle in the land. **4** He offered sacrifices and burned incense on hilltop shrines, on the tops of many other hills, and under many big trees.

5 Then King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel led their armies to attack Jerusalem. Those armies surrounded the city, but they could not defeat the army of Ahaz and conquer it. **6** (When King Rezin of Aram led his army to invade Judah, he forced the Judeans who were occupying and defending the city of Elath to leave. He made that city part of his own kingdom. Arameans went to live in Elath, and they have continued to live there.)

7 King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria to tell him, "I promise that I will become your subject king if you come and rescue me from the armies of Aram and Israel that are attacking me." **8** Ahaz took the silver and gold that was in Yahweh's temple and that he was keeping in the royal palace and sent it as tribute to the king of Assyria. **9** Tiglath Pileser agreed to do what Ahaz asked. He led his army to attack Damascus, and they captured the city. He executed Rezin. Then his army forced the people who lived in Damascus to leave and go to live in the city of Kir.

10 Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath Pileser. He saw the altar that was there. He sent Uriah, the high priest in Jerusalem, a drawing of the altar and a detailed description of how to build one like it. **11** So Uriah followed the directions that King Ahaz had sent him, and he built an altar **in Jerusalem** like the one in Damascus. Uriah worked hard to finish the altar before Ahaz returned from Damascus. **12** When King Ahaz returned from Damascus, he inspected the altar **and approved of how Uriah had built it**. Then he brought sacrifices and offered them on the altar. **13** He burned a sacrificial animal and a grain offering on it. He also poured a wine offering onto it. He also scattered on it the blood from his fellowship sacrifices. **14** There was a bronze altar **in the temple courtyard** where the Israelites considered Yahweh to be especially present. **Uriah had positioned the new altar so that the bronze altar** was between the new altar and the temple. Ahaz had Uriah move the bronze altar away from the temple and put it on the right side of his new altar. **15** Then King Ahaz ordered Uriah, "I want you to use this new altar for the sacrifices that the priests burn completely each morning and for the grain offering that they offer each evening. I also want you to use it for the

burnt offerings and grain offerings that I bring. I also want you to use it for the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and wine offerings that the people bring. When the priests offer animals as burnt sacrifices or fellowship sacrifices, scatter the blood of those animals against the sides of the altar. The old bronze altar will be only for me to use when I pray." **16** So Uriah did what the king commanded him to do.

17 King Ahaz told his workers to take off the panels of the bronze carts that were outside the temple. He also told them to take off the water basins that were on them. He also had them take the giant water basin that people called a sea off the backs of the bronze statues of oxen that it rested on. He had them put it on stones they spread on the ground **so the basin would not sink into the earth**. **18** Earlier one of the kings had had his workers build a covered walkway that people could use to get to the temple courtyard on the Sabbath day. Another king had made a private entrance into the temple courtyard for the kings of Judah. Ahaz had his workers take down that walkway and close up that entrance. Ahaz did all these things in order to please the king of Assyria. **19** The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Ahaz did. **20** When Ahaz died, the Judeans buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where people had buried his ancestors. Ahaz's son Hezekiah became the next king.

17 **1** Hoshea son of Elah began to rule Israel after Ahaz had ruled Judah for 12 years. Hoshea ruled in Samaria for 9 years. **2** He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. However, he did not do as many evil things as the previous kings of Israel had done. **3** King Shalmaneser of Assyria led his army to attack and defeat the army of King Hoshea. Hoshea became a vassal of Shalmaneser, who forced the Israelites to pay him tribute each year. **4** Then Hoshea secretly plotted to rebel against the king of Assyria. He sent messengers to King So of Egypt**, asking if his army would help the Israelites become free from Assyrian control**. Hoshea also stopped paying tribute to Assyria each year. But the king of Assyria discovered what Hoshea was doing, so **he invaded and conquered Israel and** put Hoshea in prison. **5** King Shalmaneser led his army to invade Israel. They conquered the other important cities and towns in the kingdom, and then they besieged the city of Samaria. The Israelites were able to resist for three years, **6** but finally the army of Assyria defeated them and conquered the city. This happened after King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for nine years. The Assyrians took the Israelites as captives to Assyria. They made them live in the city of Halah, near the Habor

River in the region of Gozan, and in cities in the kingdom of Media, **which the Assyrians had conquered**.

7 This happened because the Israelite people sinned against Yahweh their God. Even
though he had rescued their ancestors from Egypt, where they were slaves to Pharaoh, they
began to worship other gods. **8** They imitated the things that the people groups around them
did. Those were the people groups that Yahweh had forced to leave the land so that the
Israelites could settle there. The people of Israel also did the same evil things that most of their
kings did. **9** The Israelite people pretended they were worshiping Yahweh their God even as
they did things he had forbidden. They built shrines for idols on the hills around their cities. No
matter how many or few people lived in a place, they would build a shrine for it. **10** They set
up stone pillars to honor false gods and poles to worship the goddess Asherah. They set them
up on the tops of many hills and under many big trees. **11** The Israelites burned incense in the
places where they worshiped those false gods. That was what the people groups had done that
Yahweh forced to leave so that the Israelites could live in the land. The Israelites did many
wicked things that made Yahweh angry. **12** They worshiped idols, even though Yahweh had
specifically commanded them not to do that. **13** Yahweh frequently sent his prophets and seers
to warn the people of Israel and the people of Judah. The message that Yahweh spoke through
them was, "Stop doing all the evil things you have been doing! Instead, obey all the laws that I
gave to your ancestors and that my prophets are now telling you to obey." **14** But the Israelite
people did not do what the prophets told them to do. They were stubborn, just as their
ancestors had been. Their ancestors had not truly believed in Yahweh their God. **15** Yahweh
had given them laws to obey. He had made a covenant with their ancestors. Yahweh sent
prophets to warn them to stop disobeying him. But they disregarded all those things. Instead,
they worshiped worthless idols, and as a result, they became worthless themselves. Yahweh
had commanded them not to do the things that the people groups did that lived near them. But
they disobeyed his command. **16** The Israelite people completely disobeyed the commands
that Yahweh had given them. They made two metal images of calves and worshiped them.
They set up poles to worship the goddess Asherah, and they also worshiped the false god Baal.
They bowed down to the sun, the moon, and stars. **17** They also burned their own sons and
daughters as sacrifices to false gods. They practiced sorcery and fortune telling. They
continually chose to do things that Yahweh had told them were evil. That made Yahweh very
angry. **18** And because Yahweh was so angry with the Israelite people, he allowed their

enemies to take them away from their country. Only the people of the tribe of Judah remained in the land.

19 But even the people of Judah did not obey the commands of Yahweh their God. Instead, they did the same evil things that the people of the northern kingdom of Israel were doing. **20** So Yahweh rejected the people of Israel and of Judah. He punished them by allowing others to make them suffer. Raiders came into their land and took away their valuable possessions. Finally, the armies of other nations defeated them and carried them away from their land as prisoners. **21** Earlier, Yahweh had led ten of the Israelite tribes to reject David's descendants as their kings. Instead, those tribes chose Jeroboam son of Nebat to be their king. But Jeroboam led the people of Israel to stop worshiping Yahweh **and to worship idols instead**. He led them to commit serious sins. **22** The Israelite people continued to do the sinful things that Jeroboam had done. They did not stop doing those sinful things. **23** So Yahweh finally allowed a foreign army to conquer the Israelites and remove them from their land. That was just what he had told his prophets to warn them would happen. The Assyrians took the Israelite people to their own land, and they are still there.

24 To replace the Israelites, the king of Assyria ordered his soldiers to bring in groups of people from the cities of Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. What had been the northern kingdom of Israel was now their land, and those people settled in its cities. **25** But when those people first arrived in Israel, they did not worship Yahweh. So Yahweh allowed lions to attack them, and the lions killed some of them. **26** Some officials of the king of Assyria **found out about this** and told him, "The people who have settled in the cities of Samaria do not know how to worship the God whom people should worship if they live in that land. So that God is allowing lions to attack them and kill them because they are not worshiping him properly."

27 So the king of Assyria commanded his officers, "Get one of the priests whom you brought here from that place. Tell him to move back there and teach the people who are now living there how to worship the God of that land properly." **28** So the officers sent back one of the Israelite priests. That priest went to live in the city of Bethel. From there he taught the people who had settled in the land how to worship Yahweh properly. **29** But the people of each of those nations also made idols to represent their own gods. They put them in the shrines that the Israelites had built on the tops of hills. Each group of people put idols representing their

gods in the shrines near the cities where they lived. **30** The people from Babylon made idols to represent their god Succoth Benoth. The people from Cuthah made idols to represent their god Nergal. The people from Hamath made idols to represent their god Ashima. **31** The people from Avva made idols to represent their gods Nibhaz and Tartak. The people from Sepharvaim sacrificed their own children by burning them up on altars as offerings to their gods Adrammelech and Anammelech **32** Those people worshiped Yahweh, but they also appointed men from their own groups to be priests at the hilltop shrines. Those priests offered sacrifices in the shrines to foreign gods. **33** So they worshiped Yahweh, but they also worshiped their own gods, just as the people living in their home countries did.

34 The people who live in that area still act the way the first settlers did. Yahweh gave Jacob the new name Israel, and he gave his descendants laws to obey. But those people do not obey those laws. So they do not really worship Yahweh. **35** Yahweh had made a covenant with the Israelites. He had commanded them, "Do not revere other gods or bow down to them **to honor them**. Do not worship them or offer sacrifices to them. **36** I, Yahweh, rescued you from slavery in Egypt by my very great power. So I am the only God you are to revere. I am the one to whom you must bow down **to honor**. I am the one to whom you must offer sacrifices.
37 You must always carefully obey all of the laws that I told Moses to write down for you. You must not revere other gods. **38** You must never forget the covenant that I made with you. You must not revere other gods. **39** I, Yahweh, am the only God you are to revere. If you do that, I will prevent any enemy from conquering you." **40** But the people who live in what was the kingdom of Israel **do** not carefully **obey Yahweh's law**. Instead, they still act the way the first settlers did. **41** Each generation of these people has acted in the same way. They worship Yahweh, but they also worship idols that represent their gods. That was what their ancestors did, and that is what they still do.

18 **1** After Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost three years, Hezekiah son of Ahaz began to rule Judah. **2** Hezekiah was 25 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for 29 years. His mother was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. **3** Hezekiah did things that pleased Yahweh, just as his ancestor King David had done. **4** He had his servants destroy the shrines that were on the tops of hills. He also had them smash the stone pillars that represented Baal. He had them cut down **and burn** the poles that people had set up for

worshiping the goddess Asherah. He also broke into pieces the bronze replica of a snake that Moses had made. Hezekiah did that because at that time, the people were burning incense in front of it to honor it. (They had named it Nehushtan.) **5** Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped. No king who ruled Judah before him or after him was as devoted to Yahweh as he was. **6** Hezekiah remained loyal to Yahweh and did not disobey him. He carefully obeyed the commandments that Yahweh had given to Moses. **7** Yahweh helped Hezekiah. As a result, he won victories wherever he led his troops to fight their enemies. Hezekiah refused to be a subject of the king of Assyria and obey him. **8** Hezekiah led his army against the Philistines, and they defeated them in battles throughout their territory as far south as the city of Gaza and the area around it.

9 After Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years and Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, the army of King Shalmaneser of Assyria invaded Israel and surrounded the city of Samaria. **10** After three years, they captured the city. That was when Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost six years and Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost nine years. **11** The king of Assyria commanded his soldiers to take the Israelites as captives to Assyria. They made them live in the city of Halah, near the Habor River in the region of Gozan, and in cities in the kingdom of Media**, which the Assyrians had conquered**. **12** That happened because the Israelites did not obey the commandments that Yahweh their God had given them. They disobeyed the solemn agreement that Yahweh had made with their ancestors. That agreement included the laws that Moses had told them to obey. They were not careful to obey those laws.

13 After Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost 14 years, King Sennacherib of Assyria led his army to attack all of the cities in Judah that had walls around them. They started capturing these cities one by one. **14** King Hezekiah sent a message to Sennacherib at the city of Lachish, which he and his army were trying to capture. He told him, “What I did was wrong. Please tell your soldiers to stop attacking us. If you do that, I will pay you whatever you tell me to pay.” The king of Assyria told Hezekiah that he had to pay him 10,000 kilograms of silver and 1,000 kilograms of gold. **15** So Hezekiah sent him all the silver that was in Yahweh’s temple and that he was keeping in the royal palace. **16** **To get the gold he needed,** Hezekiah had his workers strip off the gold that he had earlier put on the doors and doorposts of the temple. He sent all that gold to the king of Assyria. **17** But the king of Assyria

sent three of his most important officials, the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh, with a large army from the city of Lachish to persuade King Hezekiah to surrender. When the army reached Jerusalem, they stopped alongside the aqueduct through which water flowed from the Upper Pool into Jerusalem. They stopped at the place where it went under the road that led to the Field of the Fuller. **18** Those officials sent a message to King Hezekiah saying that they had a message for him from the king of Assyria. Hezekiah sent three of his officials to speak with them. He sent Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace. He also sent Shebna, his official secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the official who reported to the people everything that Hezekiah decided they should do.

19 The Rabshakeh told them to tell Hezekiah, "The great king, the king of Assyria, says that you have no reason to expect that anyone will help you fight against him. **20** You claim that you have a strong enough army and good enough plans to resist him. But that is only talk. You can not resist him alone, and you can not depend on anyone else to help you. So you should not have rebelled against him. **21** You are relying on the army of Egypt to help you. But you must realize that that is like using a broken reed as a staff for support. The pointed end of such a staff would make a hole in the hand of anyone who tried to use it! That is what the king of Egypt is like. He hurts anyone who relies on him for help." **22** The Rabshakeh then said to Hezekiah's officials, "Perhaps you will tell me that you are relying on Yahweh your God to help you. But he will not help you, because Hezekiah has insulted him by destroying his hilltop shrines and the altars on which the Judeans were offering sacrifices to him. Hezekiah has required everyone who lives in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judah to worship only at the altar in Jerusalem. **23** So tell Hezekiah for me that I am offering him a deal on behalf of my master, the king of Assyria. I will give him 2,000 horses if he still has enough healthy soldiers to ride on them! **24** But also tell him that I know that even if I gave him those horses, he would not be able to defeat even one of the weakest soldiers in our army. Tell him I know that is why he is hoping that the king of Egypt will send chariots and soldiers on horseback to help him.
25 Furthermore, do not think that we have come to destroy Jerusalem without Yahweh's help. It is Yahweh himself who told us to come here and destroy this land!"

26 Then Eliakim told the Rabshakeh on behalf of himself and Shebna and Joah, "Sir, please speak to us in your own Aramaic language. We understand it. Do not keep speaking to us in our Judean language. The people who are standing on the wall can hear and understand you, and you are frightening them." **27** But the Rabshakeh told Eliakim, "You should not think

that my master sent me to say these things only to your king and to you and not also to the people on the wall who are listening! If you do not surrender, we will besiege the city, and soon they will have nothing to eat but their own dung and nothing to drink but their own urine. The three of you will also have nothing else to eat or drink." **28** Then the Rabshakeh directly faced the people on the wall. He shouted to them in Judean, "Listen to this message from the great king, the king of Assyria. **29** He says that you must not allow Hezekiah to deceive you. Hezekiah will not be able to rescue you from his army. **30** He says that you must not allow Hezekiah to persuade you to rely on Yahweh by telling you that Yahweh will certainly rescue you and that the army of Assyria will never capture this city! **31** Do not let Hezekiah persuade you! The king of Assyria says that you should come out of the city and surrender to him. He says that if you do that, instead of being very hungry as you are now, you will be able to eat the grapes and figs you have grown and drink water from your own wells. **32** He promises that you will be able to do that until his soldiers come and take you to a land that is like your land. It will be a land where you can grow grain to make bread and grow grapes to make wine. It will be a land that has groves of olive trees that produce oil and whose bees produce honey. The king encourages you to survive by surrendering rather than die by continuing to resist. He says that Hezekiah is deceiving you when he says that Yahweh will rescue you and so you must not believe him. **33** The king reminds you that none of the gods that the people of other nations worship have been able to prevent him from conquering those nations! **34** The gods of Hamath and Arpad did not come and rescue the people who lived there! The gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah did not come and rescue the people who lived there! And even the gods of Samaria did not prevent me from conquering it! **35** The king reminds you that none of these gods prevented him from conquering the people who worshiped them. So do not think that Yahweh will prevent him from conquering Jerusalem."

36 King Hezekiah had told the people, "When the Rabshakeh speaks to you, do not answer him." So the people who were listening did not say anything in reply to him. **37** Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah tore their clothes because they were extremely distressed. They went back to Hezekiah and told him what the Rabshakeh had said.

19 **1** When King Hezekiah heard what the Rabshakeh had said, to show how distressed he was, he tore his regular clothes and wore rough cloth instead. Then he went into the courtyard

of Yahweh's temple to pray. **2** Then Hezekiah sent Eliakim, Shebna, and some of the older priests to go and speak with the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. All those men were also wearing rough cloth to show their distress. **3** The men told Isaiah, "King Hezekiah says that we are now in great trouble. Yahweh seems to be punishing us for our sins. Foreigners are insulting us because we do not seem to have a God who can help us. Our lives are in danger, like the lives of the mother and child when it is time for a woman to give birth but she does not have the strength to push her baby out. **4** The Rabshakeh insulted the only true God. That was what his master, the king of Assyria, sent him to do. Perhaps Yahweh your God heard everything that he said. Perhaps he will punish him for saying those things. King Hezekiah asks you to pray for those of us who are still alive here in Jerusalem." **5** After the messengers from Hezekiah told Isaiah these things, **6** Isaiah told them to go back to the king and tell him that Yahweh said to him, "Those soldiers of the king of Assyria insulted me by saying that I was no better than the false gods that other nations worship. But you should not let what they said make you afraid. **7** I am going to send a spirit to Sennacherib that will make him anxious. Then he will hear a rumor that will worry him so much that he will return to his own country. There some men will assassinate him." **8** To report what had happened in Jerusalem, the Rabshakeh went to Libnah. He went there because he learned that the Assyrian army had left Lachish. The king of Assyria was then leading an attack against Libnah. **9** Soon after that, King Sennacherib received a report that King Tirhakah of Cush was leading his army to attack them. So he did not attack Jerusalem right away, but instead he sent more messengers to King Hezekiah. **10** The king told his messengers to tell Hezekiah, "Yahweh your God is promising you that my army will never capture Jerusalem. You trust Yahweh, but he is not telling the truth, so do not believe him. **11** You have certainly heard what the armies of the kings of Assyria have done to all the other lands they invaded. They have completely destroyed them. So do not think that you will escape! **12** The gods of other nations did not rescue them. Instead, the armies of previous kings of Assyria destroyed them. That is what happened to the people of Gozan, Haran, and Rezeph and the Edenites who lived in Tel Assar. **13** The Assyrians defeated and killed the kings of Hamath and Arpad and the cities of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah."

14 The messengers gave Hezekiah a letter from the Assyrian king that said the same thing they had told him. Hezekiah read the letter. Then he went to the temple. The Assyrian king had written the letter on a scroll, and Hezekiah unrolled the scroll so that the writing would be

visible as he prayed to Yahweh. **15** Then Hezekiah prayed, "Yahweh, you are the God to whom we Israelites belong. You are present in a special way above the statues of the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest in your temple. You are the only true God. You rule all the kingdoms on this earth. You are the one who created everything on the earth and in the heavens. **16** So, Yahweh, please pay attention to me as I speak, and look at what the king of Assyria has written. Listen **as I read it aloud** to what King Sennacherib has said to insult you, the only true God. **17** Yahweh, it is true that the armies of the kings of Assyria have completely destroyed many people groups and the lands in which they were living. **18** It is also true that they have burned up the idols of those nations. But those were not really gods. They were only wooden or stone statues. Humans made them, and that is why the Assyrians were able to destroy them so easily. **19** So now, Yahweh our God, please prevent the king of Assyria from conquering us. That way the people in all the kingdoms of the world will know that you, Yahweh, are the only true God."

20 Then Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah. He told him, "Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, says that he will do what you asked him to do when you prayed to him about Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. **21** Yahweh says that the people of Jerusalem will belittle him and make fun of him. They will shake their heads to ridicule him as he runs away from the city with his army. **22** Yahweh says that the Assyrian king should not have insulted and made fun of him, the holy God whom the Israelites worship. He should not have shouted at him or proudly looked up at the sky. **23** Yahweh says that the Assyrian king sent messengers to make fun of him. Through those messengers, **boasting about his military conquests,** he said that it was as if he had led his many chariots to the highest and most distant mountains in Lebanon. He said it was as if he and his soldiers had cut down the tallest cedar trees and best cypress trees in Lebanon. **Boasting that he would now conquer Jerusalem,** he said that it was as if he and his army would now go to the place where people most want to go in Lebanon. That is a place where workers have made a beautiful park in the midst of the forest. **24** Yahweh says that the Assyrian king is boasting that **in order to march through desolate regions,** he and his soldiers have dug wells in other countries to get water. He is also boasting that he will conquer Matsor**, which people also call Egypt,** as easily as a person can stamp out a small puddle of water.

25 But Yahweh says that the Assyrian king should realize that he planned long ago for those things to happen. Now he is causing them to occur. That is why the king's army has been

capturing and destroying many cities that were surrounded by high walls. **26** The people who lived in those cities were not able to resist the Assyrians. This discouraged them and shamed them. The Assyrians destroyed them as easily as someone can cut down green plants that are growing in a field. The Assyrians destroyed them just as the heat of the sun destroys grass on the roof of a house before it can grow. **27** But, Yahweh says, he knows where the king of Assyria lives. He knows when he leaves home and when he returns. He knows when the king yells at him angrily. **28** Yahweh says that he has heard the king yelling at him angrily. As a result, he is going to force him to return to his own country **without conquering Jerusalem** by the same route that he took to get here. It will be as if Yahweh puts a hook in his nose and a bit in his mouth in order to make him go where he wants him to go.

29 Here is a sign for you, Hezekiah**, to show that this message is truly from Yahweh**. This year, you and your people will eat wild grain. Next year, you will eat the grain that grows from the seeds of those wild plants. But the following year, you Israelites will be able to plant grain and harvest it. You will be able to plant vineyards and eat the grapes. **30** The people in Judah who remain alive will once again prosper and have many sons and daughters, like plants whose roots go deep down into the ground and that produce much fruit. **31** People will survive the Assyrian invasion. Afterwards, many of them will move from Jerusalem on Mount Zion to resettle other parts of Judah. Yahweh will eagerly make this happen. **32** Yahweh declares that the king of Assyria will not bring his army to this city. His soldiers will not shoot a single arrow at it. His soldiers will not appear outside of it carrying shields. They will not build a high mound of dirt against the city wall to try to get over it. **33** Yahweh says that the king of Assyria will not lead his army to this city. Instead, they will return to their own country by the same route that they took to get here. **34** Yahweh says that he will defend this city and prevent the Assyrians from destroying it. He will do that to show that he is the one true God and because of what he promised to his servant David**, that his descendants would always rule in Jerusalem**."

35 That night, an angel representing Yahweh went to the place where the Assyrian soldiers had set up their tents. He killed 185,000 of the soldiers. When the rest of the soldiers woke up the next morning, they saw the dead bodies of all those soldiers. **36** Then King Sennacherib had his soldiers take down their tents, and he led them away from Israel. They returned to Assyria, and Sennacherib remained in the city of Nineveh. **37** One day King Sennacherib was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch. **Two of his sons,** Adrammelech and Sharezer,

killed him with their swords. Then they escaped to the region of Ararat. Sennacherib's other son Esarhaddon became the next king of Assyria.

20 **1** Around that time, Hezekiah became so sick that he was in danger of dying. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him and told him, "Yahweh says that you should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die. You should do that because you are not going to recover from this illness. Instead, you are going to die." **2** Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall so that he could have privacy and prayed to Yahweh. He said, **3** "Yahweh, please do not forget that I have served you loyally and I have devoted myself entirely to you. I have done things that pleased you." Then Hezekiah started to cry loudly. **4** Isaiah left the king, but before he had crossed the middle courtyard of the palace, Yahweh gave him a message. He said, **5** "Go back to Hezekiah, the king of Judah, and tell him that I, Yahweh, the God whom his ancestor King David worshiped, have heard what he prayed. I have seen how he has been crying. Tell him that I will heal him. Two days from now, he will be able to go to my temple. **6** Tell him that I will enable him to live for 15 more years. Promise him that I will prevent the king of Assyria from defeating him and conquering this city. I will defend this city to show that I am the one true God and because of what I promised to my servant David." **7** Isaiah came back and told Hezekiah what Yahweh had said, then he told Hezekiah's servants, "Make a paste from figs." The servants made the fig paste and put it on the sore place on Hezekiah's body. Then he recovered.

8 Hezekiah had asked Isaiah when he told him that Yahweh would heal him, "Will Yahweh please give me a sign to show that he is going to heal me and that two days from now I will be able to go to his temple?" **9** Isaiah had replied, "Yahweh will do something that will prove to you that he will do what he promised. The shadow has gone ten steps down the stairway that serves as a sundial. Do you want him to make it go back up those ten steps?" **10** Hezekiah replied, "It would be easy to move the shadow farther down the steps because that is how it always moves. So do not ask Yahweh to do that. Instead, ask him to make it go back up those ten steps." **11** So Isaiah prayed earnestly to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused the shadow to go ten steps back up the stairs that King Ahaz had his workers build as a sundial.

12 Berodach Baladan had become the king of Babylon after his father Baladan died. Around this time, he learned that King Hezekiah had been very sick. So he sent messengers to

him. They brought a gift to Hezekiah, along with a letter **that said how glad Berodach Baladan was that Hezekiah had recovered**. **13** When the messengers arrived, Hezekiah listened when they read the letter to him from Berodach Baladan. Then he showed them all the valuable possessions he was keeping in his palace. He showed them the silver and the gold, the spices, the special olive oil, and the weapons for his soldiers. He showed them all the valuable things that were in his storerooms and in other places in his kingdom. **14** Then the prophet Isaiah went to Hezekiah and asked him, "Where did those men come from, and what did they say to you?" Hezekiah replied, "They came from a country that is far from here. They came from Babylon." **15** Isaiah asked, "What did they see in your palace?" Hezekiah replied, "I showed them everything in my palace. I showed them all the valuable things that are in my storerooms."

16 Then Isaiah told him, "Yahweh is telling you **17** that there will be a time when the Babylonian army will take away all the valuable things in your palace. That includes the things that your ancestors have put there over the years. They will leave nothing valuable here. This is what Yahweh is telling you. **18** He is also telling you that the Babylonian army will force some of your own descendants to go to Babylon. There they will be eunuchs in the royal palace."
19 Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, "I accept what Yahweh has said in the message you have delivered." He said that because he was thinking, "Even if that happens, the people of my kingdom will live peacefully and safely for as long as I am alive." **20** The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Hezekiah did, including the victories that his armies won. That book also describes how he had his workers build a reservoir in the city and a tunnel to bring water into that reservoir.
21 When Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh became the next king of Judah.

21 **1** Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to rule. He ruled Judah for 55 years in Jerusalem. His mother was Hephzibah. **2** He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. He imitated the disgusting practices of the nations that Yahweh had forced to leave the land of Canaan so that the Israelites could settle there. **3** His father Hezekiah had destroyed the shrines where the Judeans had worshiped on the tops of hills. But Manasseh commanded his workers to rebuild those shrines. He had his workers build altars for Baal. He also had them set up a pole for the worship of the goddess Asherah, as King Ahab of Israel had previously done. Manasseh also bowed down to the sun, moon, and stars to worship them.

4 He directed his workers to build altars **for worshiping foreign gods** and to put them inside
Yahweh's temple, even though Yahweh had said, "Jerusalem will be the place where people
worship me." **5** He also had his workers make altars for the sun, moon, and stars and put them
in the courtyards for the priests and the people in the temple area. **6** He even burned his own
son as a sacrifice to a false god. He performed rituals to practice sorcery. He allowed people to
dig pits so they could use them try to contact people who had died. People also used those pits
to try to talk to spirits that they thought could tell them things that people otherwise could not
know. He did very many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, and that made
Yahweh very angry. **7** He placed the pole for the worship of the goddess Asherah inside the
temple building. That was the place about which Yahweh had said to David and his son
Solomon, "I will make Jerusalem, and especially this temple, places where people will always
worship me. I chose Jerusalem for that purpose from among all of the cities in the land of
Israel. **8** And if the Israelite people carefully obey all my commands and all the laws that I
gave to them through my servant Moses, I will not make them wander again. They will be able
to stay in this land that I gave to their ancestors." **9** But the people did not carefully obey
Yahweh. Manasseh persuaded them to commit sins that were even worse than the sins that the
people of the nations committed whom Yahweh destroyed so that the Israelites could settle in
the land of Canaan.

10 Yahweh sent prophets to warn Manasseh and the people of Judah. They said,
11 "**Yahweh is angry with** King Manasseh of Judah because he has done disgusting evil things.
They are worse than the things the Amorites did who lived in the land before the Israelites.
Manasseh has also influenced the people of Judah to sin against Yahweh by worshiping the
idols that he has made. **12** Therefore Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, says
that he is going to make something terrible happen to Jerusalem and the rest of Judah. It will be
so terrible that it will shock everyone who hears about it. **13** He says that he will judge and
punish the people of Jerusalem by the same standards that he used to judge the people of
Samaria and the descendants of Ahab. When people wipe a plate clean, they turn it over to
make sure that they have left nothing on it. In the same way, Yahweh will destroy Jerusalem
and make sure that there is nothing left of it. **14** Some of its people will survive, but he will not
help them, even though he had chosen the Israelites as his special people. Instead, he will allow
their enemies to conquer them and take them and all of their valuable possessions away from
their land. **15** He will do this because his people have done things that he has told them are

very evil. This has made him very angry. They have been making him angry ever since the time when their ancestors left Egypt."

16 Manasseh also had his soldiers kill very many innocent people throughout the city of Jerusalem. He did this in addition to committing sins that influenced the people of Judah to commit sins by doing things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. **17** The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Manasseh did, including the many sins that he committed. **18** When Manasseh died, the Judeans buried him in the garden outside his palace. A man whose name was Uzza had previously owned that land. Manasseh's son Amon became the next king of Judah.

19 Amon was 22 years old when he became king. He ruled Judah from Jerusalem for two years. His mother was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz. She was from the city of Jotbah. **20** He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as his father Manasseh had done. **21** He behaved just as his father had behaved. He worshiped the same idols that his father had worshiped. He bowed down to those idols to worship them. **22** He did not worship Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors had worshiped. He did not behave as Yahweh has said people should behave. **23** Amon's officials plotted against him. They assassinated him in his palace. **24** But then the people of Judah killed all those who had assassinated King Amon. They appointed his son Josiah to be their next king. **25** The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Amon did. **26** The Judeans buried Amon in the tomb in the garden that Uzza had formerly owned. Amon's son Josiah became the next king.

22 **1** Josiah was 8 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for 31 years. His mother was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah. She was from the city of Bozkath. **2** Josiah did things that pleased Yahweh. He behaved in the same godly manner as his ancestor King David had behaved. He did not behave differently at all.

3 After Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, he sent his secretary Shaphan, whose father was Azaliah and whose grandfather was Meshullam, to Yahweh's temple. He told him, **4** "The priests who supervise the courtyard entrance have collected money from the people and brought it into the temple. Go and tell the high priest Hilkiah to get that money,

count it, and put it in bags. **5** Tell him to give the money to the men who are supervising the work of repairing the temple. They are to use it to pay the men who are doing the actual work of making the repairs that the temple needs. **6** They must use it to pay carpenters and builders and masons and to buy timber and stones that workers have shaped. The skilled workers will use that timber and stone to repair the temple." **7** The men who supervise the work are completely honest. So you do not need to require them to report how they spend the money you give them.

8 **So Shaphan did that, and later** Hilkiah reported to him, "I have found a scroll in the temple that records the laws that God gave to Moses." Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it. **9** Then Shaphan went to King Josiah and told him, "I gave the priests your instructions, and they have emptied the chest in which they were collecting money for the temple. They have given the money to the men who are supervising the work of repairing the temple." **10** Then Shaphan also told the king, "Hilkiah gave me this scroll." And Shaphan read to the king what the scroll recorded. **11** When the king heard the laws that Shaphan was reading to him from the scroll, he tore his robes **to show how concerned he was that Yahweh would punish the Judeans**. **12** Then King Josiah gave special instructions to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan his royal secretary, and Asaiah, his special advisor. He told them, **13** "Now that Hilkiah has found this scroll, I want you to go and ask Yahweh what I and the people of Jerusalem and the rest of Judah should do about what it says. Our ancestors did not obey the commandments that this scroll records. They should have done everything that Moses wrote we should do. So Yahweh must be very angry with us."

14 So Hilkiah, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to consult a woman whose name was Huldah. She was a prophetess, and she lived in the Second Quarter of Jerusalem. She was married to Shallum, whose father was Tikvah and whose grandfather was Harhas. Shallum took care of the garments that the priests wore in the temple. Those five men told Huldah about the scroll that Hilkiah had found. **15** In response, she told them, "Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says that wants you to say something to the man who sent you to me. **16** Yahweh says that he is going to make something terrible happen to this city and to the people who live here. He is going to punish them in the way that the scroll King Josiah read describes. **17** He is going to do that because they stopped worshiping him and burned incense to **honor** other gods. They made many idols, and that made him very angry. He is so angry with

them that he is going punish them. 18 But there is something further that you are to tell the king of Judah, who sent you to ask Yahweh about what the scroll said. Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says that 19 he is going to treat him mercifully. Yahweh will do that because he was so sad and he acted humbly toward me when he heard what Yahweh said he was going to do to punish this city and the people who live here. Yahweh said that he was going to do something so terrible that it would horrify people. People would curse other places by saying they wanted them to become like Jerusalem. But when King Josiah heard that, he wept and tore his robes **to show his distress**. He knew that Yahweh was watching him. That is why Yahweh declares that he is going to treat him mercifully. 20 Yahweh wants you to tell Josiah that because he was sorry for the sins of Judah, Yahweh is going to allow him to die peacefully. The Judeans will bury him in the same place where people buried his ancestors. Yahweh is still going to cause something terrible to happen to Jerusalem and the people who live in it. But Josiah will not be alive to see that." The officials returned to King Josiah and reported what Huldah had told them.

23 1 King Josiah then sent messengers to summon all the elders of Jerusalem and of the other places in the kingdom of Judah. 2 Those elders, along with many ordinary people from Judah and Jerusalem, gathered in the temple courtyard with the king. Many priests and prophets also came. A great crowd representing all the kinds of people in the city was there. While they all listened, the king read to them from the scroll that had been in the temple. He all of the laws that Yahweh had given the Israelites when he made his solemn agreement with them. 3 Then the king stood next to a pillar **on the temple porch** and he made a solemn agreement with Yahweh that he would live as Yahweh wanted him to live. He promised to obey all of Yahweh's laws sincerely and devotedly. In that way, the solemn agreement that the scroll from the temple described became the law of Israel once again. The Judean people who had gathered at the temple courtyard promised to obey that solemn agreement.

4 Then the king gave a command to the high priest Hilkiah, the other leading priests, and the priests who supervised the courtyard entrance. He told them to remove from the temple all the objects that people had been using to worship Baal, Asherah, and the sun, moon, and stars. They took those outside the city to the Kidron Valley and burned them completely there. Then they took all the ashes to the city of Bethel. 5 Previous kings of Judah had appointed many pagan priests to burn incense at hilltop shrines near many cities in Judah and in the area around

Jerusalem. Those priests had been offering sacrifices to Baal and to the sun, moon, and stars. King Josiah stopped them from doing those things. **6** Josiah ordered his servants to remove the pole for the worship of the goddess Asherah that was inside the temple building. He told them to take it outside Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley and burn it. He ordered them to pound the ashes to powder and scatter the powder in a graveyard for ordinary people that was in that area. **7** There were male prostitutes living in small houses near the temple. In those houses, women also wove articles that people used in the worship of Asherah. Josiah tore down those houses **and ended the activities that took place in them**. **8** Josiah also brought to Jerusalem all the priests who had been burning incense at hilltop shrines near other cities in Judah. He ordered his servants to demolish all of those hilltop shrines, everywhere in his kingdom. There were similar shrines in Jerusalem near the gate of Joshua, the governor of Jerusalem. That gate was to the left of the main city gate. Josiah ordered his servants to destroy those shrines as well. **9** (Josiah did not allow the priests he had brought to Jerusalem from the hilltop shrines to offer sacrifices on the altar in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem. But he did allow them to eat the food that the priests received as their share of sacrifices that people brought.) **10** There was a place that people called Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom where people used to burn their children as sacrifices to the false god Molech. Josiah had his servants destroy that place **so that no one would do that anymore**. **11** Previous kings of Judah had dedicated horses to pull chariots in processions in honor of the sun. There were stables for those horses near the entrance to the temple. A royal official whose name was Nathan Melech was responsible for the horses, and he lived in an apartment near the stables. King Josiah had his servants take the horses away from the temple and destroy the chariots by burning them. **12** Previous kings of Judah had built altars **for worshiping the sun, moon, and stars** on the palace roof. They were near the room that King Ahaz had made for himself. King Manasseh had also built altars in the two courtyards in the temple area. Josiah commanded his servants to destroy all those altars. He told them to take the debris from the altars away quickly and throw it down into the Kidron Valley. **13** King Solomon had built shrines east of Jerusalem, on the south side of the Mount of Destruction, for the disgusting gods that other people groups worshiped. He built a shrine for Ashtoreth, whom the Sidonians worshiped. He built one for Chemosh, whom the Moabites worshiped. And he built one for Milcom, whom the Ammonites worshiped. Josiah commanded his servants to ruin those shrines. **14** He also had them smash the stone pillars that represented Baal. He had them cut down **and burn** the poles that people had set up for worshiping the goddess Asherah. And he had them scatter human bones on the ground there **to make those places ritually unclean**.

15 Jeroboam son of Nebat had made an altar and a shrine at Bethel. He had influenced the Israelites to sin **by worshiping idols** when he did that. Josiah had his servants tear down the altar and the shrine, and he had them burn the shrine and crush what remained into dust. He also had them burn the pole that people had been using to worship Asherah. **16** Then Josiah looked around and saw some tombs on a nearby hill. He commanded his servants to take bones out of those tombs and burn them on the altar. This made the altar ritually unclean. Josiah did exactly what Yahweh had told a prophet **many years before** to say would happen. **17** Then Josiah **saw a tomb and** asked, "Whose tomb is that?" The people of Bethel replied, "It is the tomb of the prophet who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have just done to this altar." **18** Josiah replied, "Leave the bones of that prophet in his tomb." So the people did not remove his bones or the bones of the old prophet who had lived in that area **and who had deceived the other prophet so that he died**. **19** Josiah also ordered his servants to destroy all the hilltop shrines that were near cities in what had been the kingdom of Israel. The kings of Israel had built those shrines and made Yahweh very angry. Josiah had his servants tear down those shrines **and burn them and crush the remains and then scatter human bones on the sites**, just as he had done to the shrine at Bethel. **20** Josiah also ordered his servants to kill all the priests of those hilltop shrines right on the altars **where they had offered sacrifices to false gods**. Then he had them burn human bones on those altars **so that no one could use them for worship again**. After that, Josiah went back to Jerusalem.

21 Then the king commanded the people, "Celebrate the Passover festival to honor Yahweh your God. That is what the Law of Moses says to do **every year**." **22** During all the years when the judges ruled Israel, and during all the years when kings reigned in Israel and Judah, the Israelites had not celebrated Passover like that. **23** But now, after Josiah had been ruling for almost 18 years, the people of Jerusalem celebrated this Passover festival to honor Yahweh.

24 Furthermore, Josiah made the people who lived in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah stop doing detestable things. He forbade people to dig pits to try to contact people who had died or to try to talk to spirits that they thought could tell them secret things. He made the people throw away their household idols. He destroyed all the other kinds of idols. Hilkiah the priest had found a scroll in the temple that recorded the law of Moses. Josiah did all those things so that what the scroll recorded would become the law of Israel once again. **25** Josiah

sincerely, devotedly, and powerfully led the Judeans to worship Yahweh once again. He obeyed all the laws of Moses. No previous king was as devoted to Yahweh as he was, and no later king was that devoted either.

26 Even so, King Manasseh had done many things that had made Yahweh extremely angry with the people of Judah, and he continued to be very angry. **27** He had said, "I will allow an enemy to take the people of Judah away to a foreign country, just as an enemy took the people of Israel away. And I will reject Jerusalem, the city that I chose to be the place for the temple in which I said people would worship me."

28 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Josiah did. **29** While Josiah was the king of Judah, Pharaoh Neco of Egypt led his army north to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah led his army to fight the army of Egypt. The two armies fought at the city of Megiddo, and Josiah died in the battle there. **30** His soldiers put his body in a chariot and transported it back to Jerusalem. There the Judeans buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of Judah chose Josiah's son Jehoahaz to be their next king. They poured olive oil on his head to show that they were appointing him as their king.

31 Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became the king of Judah, but he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months. His mother was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah. She was from the city of Libnah. **32** Jehoahaz did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as many of his ancestors had done. **33** At the city of Riblah in the district of Hamath, Pharaoh Neco made Jehoahaz his prisoner so that he would no longer rule in Jerusalem. Neco then forced the people of Judah to pay to him a tribute of about 3. 3 metric tons of silver and 33 kilograms of gold. **34** Pharaoh Neco appointed another son of Josiah, Eliakim, to be the next king of Judah instead. He changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away to Egypt, and later Jehoahaz died there. **35** In order to pay Neco the silver and gold that he had demanded, Jehoiakim collected a tax from the people of Judah. He collected more from the rich people and less from the poor people. After he had collected the silver and gold from them, he paid it to Neco.

36 Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for 11 years. His mother was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah. She was from the city of

Rumah. 37 He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as many of his ancestors had done.

24 1 While Jehoiakim was ruling Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his army to invade Judah. They defeated the Judean army, and as a result, Jehoiakim became his subject king. But after three years, Jehoiakim rebelled and depended on Egypt again. 2 Then Yahweh allowed Chaldean that is, Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders to come into the land of Judah and steal the people's crops and valuable possessions. Yahweh had said through his prophets that he would punish the Judeans, and that is just what happened. 3 These things happened to the people of Judah because Yahweh had decreed that they would. He had decided to allow an enemy to take the people of Judah away to a foreign country because of the many sins that King Manasseh had committed. 4 Manasseh had also had his soldiers kill very many innocent people throughout the city of Jerusalem. Yahweh would not forgive that. 5 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehoiakim did. 6 When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became the next king. 7 The king of Babylon led his soldiers to conquer the whole area that the Egyptians had formerly controlled, from the brook at the boundary of Egypt to the Euphrates River. After that, the king of Egypt did not lead his soldiers anywhere outside of his country.

8 Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for only three months. His mother was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan. She was from the city of Jerusalem. 9 Jehoiachin did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as his father had done.

10 While Jehoiachin was the king, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ordered his commanders to lead their soldiers to attack Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and tried to conquer it. 11 While they were still doing that, Nebuchadnezzar himself came to the city with even more of his soldiers. 12 Then King Jehoiachin and his mother, advisors, military officers, and palace officials all surrendered to King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar had been king for eight years when he captured Jehoiachin. 13 Just as Yahweh had said would happen, Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers seized everything that was in the storerooms of Yahweh's temple and the king's palace. They also stripped off all the gold with which King Solomon's workers

had overlaid surfaces and furniture in the temple. 14 They forced 10,000 people to leave Jerusalem and go to Babylon. These people included the military officers and the wealthy Judeans. They also included the skilled workers and the metalworkers. The Babylonians left only the poorest people in Judah. 15 They took King Jehoiachin away to Babylon. They also took the queen mother, Jehoiachin's wives, his royal officials, and many other prominent Judeans. They made them all leave Jerusalem and go to Babylon. 16 In total, they took to Babylon 7,000 wealthy people, 1,000 skilled workers and metalworkers, and 2,000 royal and noble people. In that way, Nebuchadnezzar removed from Judah everyone who could have made a rebellion against him. 17 Then Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah to be the king of Judah instead of him. He changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah. She was from the city of Libnah.
19 Zedekiah did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as his older brother Jehoiakim had done. 20 Yahweh made these things happen to the people who lived in Jerusalem and other parts of Judah because he was very angry with them. He finally allowed the Babylonians to force them to leave their country. That happened when Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

25 1 Because Zedekiah had rebelled, King Nebuchadnezzar led his whole army to attack Jerusalem. They arrived there after Zedekiah had been ruling for nine years, on the tenth day of the tenth month of that year. They surrounded the city and built earthen ramps against its walls to help them attack it. 2 The Babylonians kept attacking the city for the next two years, until Zedekiah had been ruling for eleven years. 3 Because the Babylonians had surrounded the city, the people could not bring in any food. By the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, they had no food left. 4 Then the Chaldean soldiers that is, the Babylonian soldiers broke through the city wall and entered the city. King Zedekiah and the Judean soldiers tried to escape at night when the Chaldeans would not see them. They used the gate near the king's garden to go through the inner and outer walls of the city. Zedekiah and the soldiers tried to escape through the Jordan River valley. But the Chaldeans had surrounded the city, and some of their soldiers saw where they went. 5 So some Chaldean soldiers chased after King Zedekiah. They caught up to him in the plains around the city of Jericho. His soldiers ran away instead of fighting to defend

him. 6 So the Babylonian soldiers were able to capture King Zedekiah. They brought him to Nebuchadnezzar, who was in the city of Riblah. Nebuchadnezzar declared that Zedekiah was guilty of rebelling against him. 7 Then he forced Zedekiah to watch as his soldiers killed all of his sons. Then the soldiers gouged out Zedekiah's eyes. They put bronze chains on his hands and feet and brought him as a prisoner to the city of Babylon.

8 Nebuzaradan was one of King Nebuchadnezzar's officials. He commanded the royal bodyguards. He arrived in Jerusalem on the seventh day of the fifth month of that year. That was after Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for 19 years. 9 He ordered his soldiers to burn down Yahweh's temple, the king's palace, and all the important buildings in Jerusalem. 10 Then the Chaldean soldiers who had come to Jerusalem with Nebuzaradan tore down the walls all around Jerusalem. 11 After that, he and his soldiers took to Babylon the people who were still alive in Jerusalem. They also took other people who lived in the region of Judah. Some Judeans had previously surrendered to the Babylonian army, and they took them away too. 12 But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the very poor people to stay in Judah to take care of the vineyards and to plant crops in the fields.

13 The Chaldean soldiers broke into pieces the bronze pillars, the bronze carts, and the giant water basin that people called the sea, all of which were in the temple courtyard, and they took all the bronze to Babylon. 14 They also took the pots, shovels, wick snuffers, incense dishes, and other bronze items that the priests used for their work in the temple. 15 The soldiers also took away the pans for carrying hot coals, the small bowls, and all the other items that were pure gold or pure silver. 16 There was too much bronze for the Babylonians to weigh in the two pillars, the carts, and the giant water basin that people called the sea. King Solomon had commanded his workers to make those things for Yahweh's temple. 17 Each of the pillars was eight and one quarter meters tall. The bronze top of each pillar was one and one third meters tall. Solomon's master craftsman had decorated the tops with bronze strands that he had formed into the shape of nets. He had also made bronze decorations in the shape of pomegranates for the pillar tops.

18 Nebuzaradan took some prisoners. These included the high priest Seraiah, Zephaniah, who was another leading priest, and the three priests who had supervised the courtyard entrance. 19 The prisoners also included the royal official responsible for the army, five of the

king's advisors who had not fled, the commander who recorded the names of Judean men as they came to serve as soldiers, and 60 men who were serving as soldiers and were still in the city. **20** Nebuzaradan took them all as prisoners to the king of Babylon at the city of Riblah. **21** There at the city of Riblah, in the province of Hamath, the king of Babylon had his soldiers kill all of the prisoners. That is what happened when the Babylonians forcefully took the people of Judah away from their land.

22 King Nebuchadnezzar allowed some people to continue living in Judah. He appointed Gedaliah to be their governor. Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam and the grandson of Shaphan. **23** There were some Judean army commanders and their soldiers whom the Babylonians had not captured. When they found out that Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Gedaliah as the governor of Judah, the commanders and soldiers went to meet with him at the city of Mizpah. These commanders were Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth from the city of Netophah, and Jaazaniah, the son of a man from the region of Maacah. **24** Gedaliah solemnly promised them that they could remain in Judah without being afraid of the Chaldean soldiers. He told them that if they obeyed the king of Babylon, they could live peacefully in the land. **25** But in the seventh month of that year, Ishmael son of Nethaniah went to Mizpah with ten of his soldiers. Ishmael was a descendant of King David through his grandfather Elishama. Ishmael and his men assassinated Gedaliah. They also assassinated the Judeans who were serving in his government and the Chaldean officials who were there. **26** This made the Judeans who were still living in the land very afraid of what the Chaldeans would do to them. So a large number of them fled to Egypt. The army commanders also fled there.

27 After the Babylonians took King Jehoiachin of Judah to Babylon, 37 years went by. Then Nebuchadnezzar's son Evil Merodach became the king of Babylon. On the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of his first year as king, he released Jehoiachin from prison. **28** He reassured Jehoiachin that he would treat him well, and he gave him a position of greater honor than the other captive kings whom the Babylonians had conquered and brought to their royal court. **29** He gave Jehoiachin new clothes to replace the clothes that he had been wearing in prison, and he allowed Jehoiachin to eat meals with him every day for the rest of his life. **30** The king of Babylon also gave Jehoiachin money to buy the things he needed. He gave him

a regular amount that was sufficient for his needs. The king continued to do for as long as Jehoiachin lived.

Ezra

1

1 During the first year after Cyrus, king of Persia, **conquered the kingdom of Babylon,**
Yahweh motivated Cyrus to write a message. Yahweh did this in order to fulfill a prophecy that
Jeremiah had spoken. Cyrus sent messengers throughout his empire with copies of the message
and he ordered them to proclaim it as they went. This is what they proclaimed:

2 "I, King Cyrus, rule the Persian Empire, and I say this: Yahweh, the God who is in
heaven, has made me ruler over the great kingdoms of this part of the world. Now he has
assigned me to **make sure that his people** build a temple for him in **the city of** Jerusalem in **the
province of** Judah. **3** All you people who belong to God may go up to Jerusalem in Judah to
rebuild this temple for Yahweh. He is the God who is in Jerusalem, the God whom the people
of Israel worship. And may God give you success! **4** There are other people who are living
around the Israelites in the places where the Israelites have been living since their ancestors
were exiled here. Those people must contribute silver and gold to the Israelites who go. They
must also give to the Israelites animals and **any** supplies **that they might need**. They should also
give them other gifts that they can use to help build the temple of God in Jerusalem."

5 Then God motivated some of the priests and Levites and **some of** the clan leaders from
the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to return to Jerusalem. Those whom God motivated got ready
to return to Jerusalem and build the temple for him there. **6** Many of their neighbors helped
them by giving them silver and golden things, animals, and supplies for the journey. They also
gave them other valuable gifts, and they gave them money to buy things for building the
temple. **7** King Cyrus also commanded **his servants** to bring out the valuable things that King
Nebuchadnezzar**'s soldiers** had taken from the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem and had put in
the temples of their gods **in Babylon**. **8** **Specifically,** King Cyrus of Persia commanded
Mithredath, his treasurer, **to command his servants** to bring out all of these items and to give
each one of them to Sheshbazzar, the leader of **the group that was going to return to** Judah.
9 This is a list of the items **that Cyrus donated**: 30 gold basins, 1,000 silver basins, 29 knives,
10 30 gold bowls, 410 secondary silver bowls, and 1,000 other utensils. **11** All together, Cyrus

gave 5,400 silver and gold items to Sheshbazzar to take with him when he and the others returned from the kingdom of Babylon to Jerusalem.

2 **1** Many years ago, the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had captured many Israelite people and taken them away to the kingdom of Babylon. Now, these Israelite people began to return to Judah. Some returned to Jerusalem, and some returned to other places in Judah. Each of them went to the towns where their ancestors had lived. This is a list of the groups who returned. **2** The leaders of those people who returned were Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The groups of people who returned to Judah are listed next.

3 2,172 descendants of Parosh,

4 372 descendants of Shephatiah,

5 775 descendants of Arach,

6 2,812 descendants of Pahath-Moab, from the families of Jeshua and Joab,

7 1,254 descendants of Elam,

8 945 descendants of Zattu,

9 760 descendants of Zaccai,

10 642 descendants of Bani,

11 623 descendants of Bebai,

12 1,222 descendants of Azgad,

13 666 descendants of Adonikam,

14 2,056 descendants of Bigvai,

15 454 descendants of Adin,

16 98 descendants of Ater, who descended from Hezekiah,

17 323 descendants of Bezai,

18 112 descendants of Jorah,

19 223 descendants of Hashum,

20 95 descendants of Gibbar.

21 **The following is a list of people whose ancestors had lived in these towns in Judah:**

123 from Bethlehem,

22 56 from Netophah,

23 128 from Anathoth,

24 42 from Azmaveth,

25 743 from Kiriath Arim, Kephirah, and Beeroth,

26 621 from Ramah and Geba,

27 122 from Michmas,

28 223 from Bethel and Ai,

29 52 from Nebo,

30 156 from Magbish,

31 1,254 from the other Elam,

32 320 from Harim,

33 725 from Lod, Hadid, and Ono,

34 345 from Jericho,

35 3,630 from Senaah.

36 These are the priests who returned:

973 descendants of Jedaiah (that is, those who descended through Jeshua),

37 1,052 descendants of Immer,

38 1,247 descendants of Pashur,

39 1,017 descendants of Harim,

40 These are the descendants of Levi who returned:

74 descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel, who were from the family of Hodaviah,

41 128 musicians who were descendants of Asaph,

42 139 gatekeepers who were descendants of the gatekeepers Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai,

43 The following is a list of the temple workers who returned. They were the descendants of these men: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, **44** Keros, Siaha, Padon, **45** Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, **46** Hagab, Shalmai, Hanan, **47** Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, **48** Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, **49** Uzza, Paseah, Besai, **50** Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim, **51** Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, **52** Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, **53** Barkos, Sisera, Temah, **54** Neziah, and Hatipha.

55 The following descendants of King Solomon's servants returned **to Jerusalem**. They were the descendants of these men: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, **56** Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, **57** Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth Hazzebaim, and Ami. **58** Altogether, there were 392 descendants of temple workers and Solomon's servants who returned.

59 There was another group that returned **to Judah** from **the towns of** Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cerub, Addon, and Immer **in Babylonia**. But they could not prove that they were

genuine Israelites. 60 This group included 652 people who were descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda. 61 The descendants of the priests in this group included people belonging to Habaiah's clan, Hakkoz's clan, and Barzillai's clan. Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of Barzillai from the region of Gilead. He had taken the name of his father-in-law's clan for himself. 62 The people in this group searched in the documents that listed the names of the descendants from the various Israelite clans, but they did not find their names there. So the officials did not permit them to do the work that priests did. 63 The governor told these men that they could not eat the shares of the sacrifices that only the priests could eat until a high priest could consult Yahweh by using the sacred lots to determine that they truly were descendants of priestly families. Only if the high priest determined that these men truly were priests could they eat the most sacred food.

64 Altogether in this group, 42,360 Israelite people returned to Judah. 65 The Israelites also brought along with them 7,337 male and female servants and 200 male and female musicians. 66 The Israelites also brought with them from Babylonia 736 horses, 245 mules, 67 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

68 When they arrived at the ruins of the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, some of the clan leaders gave money for the supplies needed to rebuild the temple in the same place where the old temple had been. 69 Each one gave as much as he was able to give for the work on the temple. Altogether, they gave 61,000 gold coins, 5,000 silver bars, and 100 robes for the priests.

70 So all of these priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants, and other people returned to live in the towns and villages of the province of Judah. They settled in the places where their ancestors had lived.

3 1 After the Israelite people returned and began to live in their towns, in the autumn of that year, they all gathered together in Jerusalem. 2 Then Joshua son of Jehozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates all began to rebuild the altar of the God of Israel. They did that so that they could sacrifice burnt offerings on it. They wanted to follow what the prophet Moses had written in the laws that God had given to him. 3 Even though they were afraid of the people who were already living in that area, they rebuilt the

altar at the same place where the previous altar had been. They began to offer sacrifices to Yahweh on it every morning and every evening. **4** **Fifteen days after they started to offer these sacrifices,** the people celebrated the Festival of Shelters. **Moses had commanded them to do this in the decrees that God had given to him.** Each day the priests offered the sacrifices that were required for that day. **5** From then on, they presented the regular burnt offerings and the **other required** offerings**. These were** for the New Moon festivals and the other festivals that they celebrated as special times each year to honor Yahweh. They also brought other offerings to Yahweh just because they wanted to**, not because they were required to bring them**. **6** But even though they started bringing burnt offerings to Yahweh at the beginning of autumn, they had not yet started rebuilding the temple. **7** So the **leaders of the** Israelites hired stone-cutters and carpenters **to do the construction work**. They also bought logs of cedar trees from the people of **the cities of** Tyre and Sidon. To pay for the logs, the Israelites sent grain, wine, and olive oil to those people. Since King Cyrus had said that the Israelites could buy these things, the people of Tyre and Sidon **agreed. They** brought the logs down from the mountains in Lebanon to the seashore at Joppa and then floated them along the coast to **the city of** Joppa. **Then they brought the logs inland from Joppa up to Jerusalem.**

8 The Israelites started to rebuild the temple in the second month of the second year after they had returned to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Joshua the son of Jozadak, their fellow leaders the priests and the Levites, and all the people who had come from where their enemies had taken them to Jerusalem supported this project. The leaders assigned the Levites who were twenty years old and older to supervise this work of rebuilding the temple for Yahweh. **9** Jeshua, his sons, and his other relatives, and Kadmiel and his sons together helped to supervise those who were doing the work on the temple. They were all descendants of Judah. The sons and grandsons of Henadad along with the rest of their fellow Levites **joined in the work**. **10** When the builders finished laying the foundation of the temple of Yahweh, the priests and the Levites did what King David had told Asaph and the other musicians to do **many years previously** in order to praise Yahweh. The priests put on their robes and stood in their places, blowing their trumpets. Then the Levites who were descendants of Asaph clashed their cymbals. **11** Then the Levites praised Yahweh and thanked him by singing this song about him:

"He is very good to us!

He will continue to be faithful and kind to us Israelites **and he will love us** forever." Then all the people shouted loudly. They praised Yahweh because they had finished laying the foundation of his temple. **12** Many of the old priests, Levites, and leaders of families remembered seeing the first temple. They cried aloud when they saw the workers lay the foundation of this temple **because they thought that this temple would not be as big or as beautiful as the first temple**. But the other people shouted joyfully in loud voices. **13** Since the shouting was so loud, no one could tell the difference between the people who were shouting joyfully and the people who were crying sorrowfully. All the noise was so loud that even people far away could hear it.

4 **1** The enemies of **the people of the tribes of** Judah and Benjamin learned that the Israelites who had returned from Babylon were rebuilding the temple for Yahweh, the God whom the people of Israel worship. **2** So they approached Zerubbabel the governor and the other clan leaders and **deceptively** said to them, "We want to help you to build the temple. After all, we also worship your God. We have been offering sacrifices to him since the time that Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, brought us here."

3 But Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the other Jewish clan leaders replied, "We will not allow you to help us build a temple for our God. No, we alone will build it for Yahweh, the God whom Israel worships, because that is what King Cyrus of Persia told us to do."

4 Then the people who had been living in that land **before the Israelites returned there** started doing things to make the Jews discouraged and afraid to continue building **the temple**. **5** They bribed government officials to prevent the Jews from fulfilling their plans **to rebuild the temple and the city**. They did that all during the time that Cyrus was king of Persia, and continued to do it during **the time of the kings after him, including** the time when Darius was king of Persia.

6 These enemies of the Jews continued to accuse them during the time that **Darius' son** Ahasuerus was king. When Ahasuerus became king, they wrote a letter to him in which they accused the people living in the province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem **of planning to rebel against the government**.

7 Then again during the time of Artaxerxes, who was the next king of Persia, the enemies of the Jews wrote a letter to him. Some men named Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel were the leaders of this group. They had someone write the letter for them in the Aramaic language, using the Aramaic alphabet.

8 Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, agreed that they could write the letter to King Artaxerxes with their authority to protest about what was happening in Jerusalem. This is what they wrote:

9 From Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the provincial secretary, and others with us who are judges and other government officials. We represent the people from the areas of Persia, Erech, Babylon, and Susa in the district of Elam, 10 as well as the other people groups whom the great and glorious Ashurbanipal had deported and sent to live in cities in Samaria and in the rest of the province west of the Euphrates River. Therefore: 11 (This is what they wrote in the letter that they sent to him:)

This letter is for King Artaxerxes. It comes from the officials serving you who live in the province west of the Euphrates River. Therefore:

12 "Your Majesty, we want you to know that the Jews who left from your territories are now living near us. They are rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. These people are wicked and want to rebel against you. Therefore, they are now rebuilding the walls of that city and repairing the foundations of its buildings. 13 It is important for you to know that if they rebuild this city and finish building its walls, they will stop paying any taxes. As a result, there will be less money in your treasury.

14 So, because we are loyal to you, and because we do not want anyone to humiliate you, for these reasons we are sending this information to you. 15 We suggest that you order your officials to search among the records that your predecessors kept. If you do that, you will find out that the people in this city have always rebelled against their rulers. You will find out that these people have withheld taxes from kings and from rulers of provinces. You will find out that from long ago the leaders of this city have started rebellions. That is the reason why the Babylonian army destroyed this city. 16 We want you to know that if they rebuild this city and finish building its walls, then you will no longer be able to control any of the people in this province west of the Euphrates River."

17 After the king read this letter, he sent this reply to them:

"To you, Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, and your colleagues in Samaria and in other parts of the province that is west of the Euphrates River, I send my greetings. Therefore:

18 My officials carefully read out loud to me the letter that you sent to us. 19 Then I ordered my officials to search the records. I have found out that what you said is true. The people of Jerusalem have repeatedly revolted against their rulers, beginning a long time ago. 20 In the past, powerful kings ruled in Jerusalem. They also ruled over the whole province west of the Euphrates River. They forced the people there to pay them all kinds of taxes.

21 Therefore, you must command those Jews to stop rebuilding the city. They will only be allowed to resume if I tell them that they may rebuild it. 22 Do this immediately, because I do not want those people to do anything more that will cause me to lose any territory or income."

23 Then King Artaxerxes sent messengers with a copy of the letter to Rehum and Shimshai the provincial secretary and their colleagues. As soon as the messengers finished reading it out loud to them, Rehum and Shimshai and their colleagues went quickly to the Jews in Jerusalem, and they forced the Jews to stop rebuilding the city. 24 Because the enemies of the Jews kept opposing them so strongly in these ways, the Jews had stopped rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. They did not do any more work to rebuild the temple until the second year after Darius had become the king of Persia.

5 1 At that time two prophets were giving messages from God to the Jews living in Jerusalem and in other cities in Judah, saying that they should continue rebuilding the temple. Those prophets were Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Iddo. They spoke their messages representing the God whom the people of Israel worshiped, the one who ruled them. 2 So Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak led many other people to start rebuilding the temple of God in Jerusalem again. God's prophets Haggai and Zechariah were with them and helping them.

3 But then Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-Bozenai went to Jerusalem together with some of their officials and said to the people, "Who

has permitted you to do all this work to rebuild this temple?” 4 They also asked the Jews to tell them the names of the men who were working on this temple.

5 However, God was taking care of the Jewish leaders, and their enemies did not make them stop **building the temple**. Instead, the enemies sent King Darius a report and waited for him to send back a decree about it. **The decree would either allow the Jewish leaders to finish their work on the temple, or else it would command them to stop their work completely**.

6 This is a copy of the report that Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-the-River, Shethar-Bozenai, and their associates, **who were** the officials of the province of Beyond-the-River, sent to King Darius. 7 When they sent the report to him, this is what they wrote in it:

“King Darius, we hope everything is going well for you.

8 We want you to know that we went to the temple of the great God in the province of Judah. The people are building it with huge stones, and they are putting wooden beams in the walls. They are doing this work very carefully, and they are making good progress.

9 So we asked the Jewish leaders, ‘Who has permitted you to rebuild this temple?’ 10 We also asked them for the names of their leaders so that we could write them down and so that we could inform you who their leaders were.

11 This is what they told us in reply. They said, ‘We serve the God who created heaven and earth. We are rebuilding his temple, which a great king of Israel originally completed many years ago. 12 But our ancestors did things that caused God, who is in heaven, to become very angry. So God allowed **the armies of** Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, a Chaldean, to conquer them. His armies destroyed that temple, and they took many of the Israelite people to Babylon.

13 However, during the first year that Cyrus ruled as king of Babylon, he decreed that our people could rebuild the temple for God. 14 There had been a lot of containers made of gold and silver in the temple of God. Nebuchadnezzar took them from the temple in Jerusalem and brought them to a temple **for his god** in Babylon. Later, King Cyrus removed those containers from that temple in Babylon and gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he appointed as governor **of Judah**. 15 King Cyrus told Sheshbazzar to take these containers and put them

back in the temple in Jerusalem. He also decreed that the Jews should rebuild the temple at the place where it had been before. 16 So Sheshbazzar came here to Jerusalem and supervised the men who laid the foundation of this temple. And since that time, the people have been working on the temple, but they have not finished it yet.'

17 Therefore, your Majesty, please order your officials to search in the place in Babylon where you keep the royal records. Have them find out whether or not it is true that King Cyrus decreed that the Jews should rebuild this temple of God in Jerusalem. Then please tell us what you would like us to do about this matter."

6 1 So King Darius commanded his servants to search in the places where he kept important records there in the kingdom of Babylon. 2 They searched, and they found a scroll that contained the information that they wanted to know in the fortress city of Ecbatana in the province of Media. This is what that scroll said:

3 "During the first year that King Cyrus ruled the empire, he sent out a decree concerning the temple of God that was in Jerusalem. He said, 'I command that the Jews shall build a new temple in the same place where they had previously offered sacrifices. They must make the temple 27 meters high and 27 meters wide. 4 They must build the temple from large stones. After putting down three layers of stones, the workers must put a layer of new timber on top of them. I will pay for this work with money from the royal treasury. 5 I also give back to the Jews the gold and silver containers that had belonged to the temple of God but that Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon. The Jews must take these and return them to the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews must put each one back in its original place in the temple of God.'"

6 After learning this from the scroll, King Darius had a scribe write that information in a letter that he sent to the leaders of the enemies of the Jews in Jerusalem. He also included this message:
"This is a message for you, Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, for you, Shethar-Bozenai, and for all of your associates, who are the officials of that province: Stay away from there! 7 Allow them to continue the work of rebuilding that temple of God. Allow the governor of the Jews and their elders to lead their people in building this new temple on the same site as the former temple. 8 Furthermore, I command you to help these leaders of the Jews in the following ways as they rebuild this temple of God. You must be sure to give

these men funds so that they can continue the building work. Take the money from my treasury, from the tribute you collect in the province west of the Euphrates River. 9 The priests in Jerusalem need animals to sacrifice as burnt offerings to the God who is in heaven. This may include young bulls or rams or lambs. They may also need wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil to go with those sacrifices. Make sure that you diligently give them whatever they demand of those things every day. 10 When you do that, they will be able to offer sacrifices that please the God who is in heaven, and they will be able to pray that God will bless me and my sons.

11 This is what I command about anyone who disobeys this decree. My soldiers will pull a beam from his house and sharpen one end of it. Then they will bury the other end of the beam in the ground so that it stands upright. Then they will pick that person up and ram his body onto the sharpened beam. Then they will completely destroy that person's house until only a pile of rubble is left, because he disobeyed me. 12 God himself has chosen that city of Jerusalem as the place where people will honor him. May he get rid of any king or any nation that tries to change this decree or destroy that temple in Jerusalem! I, Darius, make this decree. You must completely obey it."

13 Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates read the message from King Darius and immediately obeyed what the message from King Darius commanded them to do. 14 So the Jewish leaders continued to progress in their work of rebuilding the temple. The messages that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo preached encouraged them greatly. The people worked until they completed the temple, just as their God had commanded them to do, and just as the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius had decreed, and as the Persian king Artaxerxes would decree later. 15 The people finished building this temple on the third day of the month of Adar, during the sixth year that King Darius ruled the kingdom of Persia.

16 Then the people of Israel, that is, the priests, the Levites, and everyone else who had returned from Babylonia, joyfully dedicated this temple to God. 17 During the ceremony to dedicate this temple to God, they sacrificed 100 young bulls, 200 rams, and 400 lambs. They also sacrificed 12 male goats as an offering so that God would forgive the sins of all the people, because that was how many tribes there were in Israel. 18 Then the Jewish leaders divided the priests and Levites into groups that would take turns serving in the temple of God

in Jerusalem. They did this according to what Moses had written many years previously in the law.

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month, the Jews who had returned from Babylonia
celebrated the Passover Festival. 20 To qualify themselves for offering the sacrifices, all the
priests and Levites had already purified themselves by performing the proper rituals. Then they
slaughtered the lambs for the benefit of everyone who had returned from Babylonia, for the
other priests, and for themselves. 21 All of the Israelite people celebrated the Passover. This
included the Israelites who had returned from Babylonia and the people who had separated
themselves from the people of the area around them who worshiped other gods. They separated
themselves from those people and joined the Israelites so that they could worship Yahweh, the
God whom the Israelite people worshiped. 22 Then for the next seven days, they joyfully
celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread. They were joyful because Yahweh had caused the
king of Assyria to be favorable to them. As a result, the king had helped them to rebuild the
temple of God, the God whom Israel worshiped.

7 1 Many years later, during the time when Artaxerxes was the king of Persia, there was a
man named Ezra. He was a descendant of Seraiah, who was the son of Azariah, who was the
son of Hilkiah. 2 Hilkiah was the son of Shallum, who was the son of Zadok, who was a
descendant of Ahitub, 3 who was a descendant of Amariah, who was the son of Azariah, who
was a descendant of Meraioth, 4 who was the son of Zerahiah, who was the son of Uzzi, who
was the son of Bukki, 5 who was the son of Abishua, who was the son of Phinehas, who was
the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron, the first Supreme Priest. 6 This man Ezra knew
the laws of Moses very well. Those were the laws that Yahweh had given to the people who
worship him, the Israelite people. Ezra asked the king for many things and the king gave Ezra
everything that he asked for because Yahweh, the God whom Ezra worshiped, caused all of it
to go well for him. Then Ezra traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem.

7 Many Israelite people came with Ezra to Jerusalem, including some priests, some
Levites, some musicians, some gatekeepers, and some of the descendants of men who worked in
the temple. That was during the seventh year that Artaxerxes was the king of Persia. 8 Ezra
and the group with him arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year that
Artaxerxes was king.

9 Consider this: They started out from Babylon on the first day of the first month. They
arrived safely in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month of that year. God certainly acted
very kindly toward them. 10 God made Ezra's journey successful because Ezra had devoted
himself to studying the laws of Yahweh and understanding how to obey them. He had also
devoted himself to teach everything in those laws to the Israelite people.

11 King Artaxerxes gave a letter to Ezra the priest and scribe who studied what Yahweh
had commanded in the law that Yahweh had given to Israel. This is what the letter said:

12 "This letter is from Artaxerxes, the greatest of the kings. I am giving it to Ezra the
priest, who has carefully studied the law that the God who is in heaven gave to the Israelite
people. Greetings. This is what I want you to know:

13 I am commanding that any of the Israelite people in my kingdom may go with you to
Jerusalem if they want to go. That includes priests and Levites.

14 I, the king, and my seven advisors are sending you to investigate whether the people of
Judah and Jerusalem are following the law of your God that you carry. 15 We are also telling
you to take with you the silver and gold that I and my advisors will give to you. We give it
freely to the God of Israel who has a temple in Jerusalem. 16 You should also take any silver
and gold that the people in the entire province of Babylonia may give to you. Add that to the
money that the Israelite people and the priests freely give for you to use at the temple of their
God in Jerusalem. 17 Then carefully use this money to buy the bulls, rams, and lambs that the
priests will burn on the altar of the temple of your God in Jerusalem. Also buy the grain and
wine that go with these offerings.

18 If there is any silver or gold left over after you buy all of those things, you and your
companions may use it to buy whatever you think that your God wants you to buy. 19 We have
also given to you some valuable containers for the priests to use in the temple of your God.
Take all of them to your God in Jerusalem. 20 If you need to supply any other things for the
temple of your God, I permit you to get the money to pay for those things from the royal
treasury.

21 And I, King Artaxerxes, personally command this to all the treasurers in the province
west of the Euphrates River: Ezra is a priest who has carefully studied the laws of the God who

is in heaven. If there is anything that he requests, give it to him quickly. 22 Give him up to three and one-third metric tons of silver, up to 500 bushels of wheat, up to two and one-fifth kiloliters of wine, up to the same amount of olive oil, and all the salt that he requests. 23 Be sure that you provide everything that the God who is in heaven requires for his temple. We certainly do not want this God to be angry with me or with my descendants, **who will later be kings, because I did not provide what he required**. 24 By means of this letter, I also prohibit you from collecting tax payments of any kind from any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, or any men who work in the temple. They are exempt from taxes **because** they serve in the temple of this God. 25 Now I will address you, Ezra. The God whom you worship has made you wise. Therefore, I want you to appoint men who can settle disputes between people and interpret God's laws for all **of the Jews** in the province west of the Euphrates River. They must do this for all of those who know the laws of this God, and all of you must teach God's laws to those who do not know them. 26 **You and the men whom you appoint** must make sure to severely punish everyone who does not obey my law or the law of the God whom you worship. You may decide whether to execute them or to send them out of the country or to take away all of their property or to put them in prison."

27 **When I, Ezra, read this letter, I said,** "Praise Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped! He has caused the king to want to honor his temple in Jerusalem. 28 God also acted very kindly to me by causing the king and his advisors and all of his powerful officials to want to help me. When I saw how Yahweh, the God whom I worship, was making all of my plans succeed, I boldly asked some of the Israelite leaders to go **to Jerusalem** with me."

8 1 "This is a list of the names of the clan leaders, along with the names of their clans, who traveled **to Jerusalem** with me from Babylonia when Artaxerxes was king **of Persia**:

2 Gershom from the clan descended from **Aaron's grandson** Phinehas.

Daniel from the clan descended from **Aaron's son** Ithamar.

Hattush from the clan descended from **King** David. 3 **Hattush was also** a descendant of Shecaniah.

Zechariah and 150 other men from the clan descended from Parosh.

4 Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah and 200 other men from the clan descended from Pahath-Moab.

5 Shecaniah son of Jahaziel and 300 other men from the clan descended from **Zattu**.

6 Ebed son of Jonathan and 50 other men from the clan descended from Adin.

7 Jeshaiah son of Athaliah and 70 other men from the clan descended from Elam.

8 Zebadiah son of Michael and 80 other men from the clan descended from Shephatiah.

9 Obadiah son of Jehiel and 218 other men from the clan descended from Joab.

10 Shelomith son of Josiphiah and 160 other men from the clan descended from **Bani**.

11 Zechariah son of Bebai and 28 other men from the clan descended from **another man whose name was** Bebai.

12 Johanan son of Hakkatan and 110 other men from the clan descended from Azgad.

13 Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah and 60 other men from the clan descended from Adonikam. They were the last three leaders from the clan descended from Adonikam **that had not returned earlier with Zerubbabel**.

14 Uthai and Zaccur and 70 other men from the clan descended from Bigvai.

15 **This is an account of how we traveled to Jerusalem.** I gathered together all of these Israelites at the canal that goes from Babylon to Ahava. We set up our tents and stayed there for three days. **During that time** I interviewed the people and the priests and discovered that there were no Levites among us. **16** So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, **another man named** Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were all leaders of the people. I also summoned Joiarib and **a third man named** Elnathan, who were wise. **17** I sent them all to Iddo, a Levite leader who was living in a place called Kasiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and to his fellow Levites, the **descendants of** temple workers whom he oversaw there. I wanted them to send us some men who would **go with us to** work in the temple of our God.

18 Because God acted kindly toward us, they brought us a very wise man named Sherebiah and 18 of his sons and other relatives. He was a descendant of Mahli, who was a grandson of Levi, the son of Israel. **19** They also sent to us Hashabiah, along with Jeshaiah, and 20 of his brothers and their sons. Both men were descendants of Merari the son of Levi. **20** They also sent 220 other men to work in the temple. King David and his officials had appointed the ancestors of these men to assist the Levites. I listed the names of all of these men.

21 There alongside the Ahava Canal, I announced a time for all of us to abstain from eating food and to pray. I told them that this was a time to humble ourselves in the presence of our God and to pray that God would protect us, our children, and our possessions while we traveled. **22** Previously we had told the king that our God takes care of all those who truly trust in him, but that he powerfully punishes everyone who refuses to obey him. So I would have been ashamed to ask the king to send soldiers and men riding on horses to protect us from our enemies while we were traveling along the road. **23** So we abstained from eating food and we asked our God to protect us. We prayed to him, and he answered our prayer.

24 I chose 12 of the leaders of the priests and brought them together with Sherebiah and Hashabiah and ten of the other Levites. **25** I assigned to each of them a portion of the gifts of silver and gold and the other valuable items to transport to Jerusalem. These were the items that the king and his advisors and other officials, and the Israelite people who were living in Babylonia, had contributed for the temple of our God. **26** As I gave these various items to those men, I weighed each of the items. This was the total: about 21 and one half metric tons of silver, items made from silver that altogether weighed three and one third metric tons, three and one third metric tons of gold, **27** 20 gold bowls that altogether weighed about eight and one-half kilograms, and two items made of beautiful polished bronze that were as valuable as ones made of gold. **28** I said to those priests and Levites, 'I have set you apart from the others to serve Yahweh in a special way. The people have also set apart these valuable things for only him. The people also gave the silver and the gold voluntarily as an offering to Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped. **29** So guard them carefully. When we arrive in Jerusalem, weigh them out where the leading priests and Levites and the other leaders of the Israelite clans can see them. They will then put them in the storerooms in the temple of Yahweh.'

30 So these priests and Levites said that they would be responsible to transport all of the gifts of silver and gold and other valuable items to the temple of our God in Jerusalem.

31 On the twelfth day of the first month, we left the Ahava Canal and started to travel to Jerusalem. Our God took care of us, and while we traveled, he prevented any enemies from attacking or robbing us. 32 After we arrived in Jerusalem, we rested for three days. 33 Then on the fourth day we went to the temple of our God. There the priests and Levites weighed out the silver and gold and the other items and gave them to the leaders there. The leaders there were two priests, Meremoth the son of Uriah and Eleazar the son of Phinehas, and two Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui. 34 They counted everything, and wrote down how much each item weighed, and wrote a description of each one as they received it.

35 The Babylonian soldiers had captured our ancestors and taken them away to Babylon, but now we who are their descendants have safely returned to Israel. So we offered sacrifices of burnt offerings to our God: 12 bulls, one for each of the 12 tribes of the Israelite people, 96 rams, and 77 lambs. We also sacrificed 12 male goats to atone for the sins that all of the Israelite people had committed. We offered all of these sacrifices to Yahweh by putting them on the fire of the altar.

36 Some of us who had returned from Babylonia took the letter that the king had given to us to the governors of the king's provinces and to the officials of the province west of the Euphrates River. After they read the letter, they did what the king commanded for us Israelite people and for the temple of God."

9 1 "After that, some of the Jewish leaders came to me and said, 'Many Israelites and even some priests and Levites have not kept themselves from doing what the other people who are living in this land do. They are doing the same disgusting things that those people do. Those people are from the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. 2 Specifically, some Israelite men have married women from these groups, and they have allowed their sons to do the same thing. So they are making us, God's sacred people, to be no longer distinct from the other groups that live here. In fact, some of our leaders and officials have been the first ones to betray God in this way!'

3 When I heard that, I was so sad and angry that I tore my clothes and my robe. I even
pulled out some hair from my head and my beard. Then I sat down. I was very dismayed.
4 Many of the Jews still respected God's commandment not to marry foreign women, and they
were upset and afraid because some of those who had returned from Babylonia had disobeyed
it. They gathered around me as I sat there dismayed until the time of the evening sacrifice.

5 When it was time to offer the evening sacrifice, I stopped sitting there, silently showing
how ashamed and sad I felt. Still wearing those torn clothes, I got on my knees and opened my
hands in prayer to Yahweh, my God, 6 and this is what I prayed: 'God, I belong to you. Yet I
am very ashamed even to approach you in prayer. This is because the sins that we Israelites
have committed are very bad. It is as though our sins are so many that they have risen up in a
heap that is higher than our heads. We are so guilty for committing those sins that it is as
though the heap of them has risen all the way up to you in heaven. 7 Since the time of our
ancestors until now, we, the Jewish people, have been very guilty of sinning against you. That is
the reason why you, God, allowed the armies of the kings of other lands to do whatever they
wanted to do with our people and with our kings and our priests. They killed many of them,
they captured many of them, they robbed many of them, and they caused them all to be
disgraced, just as we are today.

8 But for just a little while now, Yahweh our God, you have been kind to us. You have
allowed some of us to survive. You have given us a secure home in your sacred place. You
have made us joyful and given us some freedom, even though the Persian king is still our
master. 9 Yes, we are like slaves, but even so, you have not abandoned us. Instead, you have
caused the kings of Persia to act very kindly toward us. They have given us some freedom and
allowed us to rebuild your temple, which had been destroyed. They have allowed us to live
safely here in the province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem.

10 Our God, there is nothing that we can say now to defend ourselves after all of the sinful
things that we have done. We have continued to disobey your commands. 11 They are the
commands that you gave to your servants, the prophets, to tell to us. They told us that it was as
though the land that we would occupy was a filthy land because the people who live there do
disgusting things. They said that those people continually do shameful things, making it seem
like the land is full of filth from one end to the other. 12 They said, "Therefore do not allow
your daughters to marry their sons! Do not allow your sons to marry their daughters! Do not

ever try to cause things to go well for those people! If you obey these instructions, your nation will be strong. You will enjoy the good crops that grow on the land, and the land will belong to your descendants forever.”

13 But you punished us because we became very guilty for doing wicked things. Still, you, our God, have not punished us as much as we deserve for you to punish us. I say this because you have allowed this group of us to survive. 14 However, some of us are again disobeying your commands. Some of us have married women from the people groups that do those detestable things. If we continue to do that, you will be so angry with us that you will destroy us completely, leaving none of us to survive!

15 Yahweh, God of Israel, you always do the right thing! Because of that, you have continually allowed some of us to survive, just as you have done with this group now. But we acknowledge that we are guilty of disobeying you and so because of what we have done, we do not deserve even to pray to you.’”

10 1 Ezra prostrated himself on the ground in front of the temple as he cried and prayed to God. He was confessing to God the sins that the people had committed. While he was doing that, a very large crowd of Israelites gathered around him, consisting of men, women, and children. They all cried very, very much because they had sinned against God.

2 Then Shecaniah, the son of Jehiel from the clan of Elam, spoke. He said this to Ezra: “We have disobeyed our God. Some of us have married women who are not Israelites. They come from the other people groups that live around us. But we can still hope that Yahweh will be merciful to us Israelite people. 3 Here is what I suggest. We should do what God told us to do in his laws. We should make an agreement with our God that we will divorce our foreign wives and send them away with their children. We will do everything according to what you, sir, and the others who greatly respect what our God has commanded, tell us to do. 4 Since you are our leader, get going, and be courageous, and do what is necessary to fix this problem. We will do whatever you say.”

5 So Ezra acted to fix the problem. He demanded that all of the Israelite people, including the leaders of the priests and the Levites, solemnly declare that they would do what Shekaniah said that they should do. So they all solemnly promised to do that. 6 Then Ezra went away

from in front of the temple and went to the room where Jehohanan the grandson of Eliashib lived. Ezra continued to grieve because some of the Israelites who had returned from Babylonia had not faithfully obeyed God's laws. So while he was there, he did not eat or drink anything.

7 Then the leaders sent a message to all the people in the province of Judan and the city of Jerusalem. They told them that all the Jews who had returned from Babylonia had to come to Jerusalem immediately. **8** The leaders announced the following penalties for anyone who did not arrive within three days. They would take away all the property belonging to that person, and they would banish that person from the community of Israelites. **9** So within three days, by the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the men from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin gathered in Jerusalem. They were sitting in the courtyard in front of the temple. They were trembling because it was raining hard and **because they were worried that they would be punished** for what they had done.

10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "Some of you have sinned very badly **against God**. Specifically, you have married women who are not Israelites. By doing that, you have made us Israelite people more guilty than we were before. **11** So now, confess your sin to Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, and do what he commands. **That is,** separate yourselves from the people of other nations by divorcing your foreign wives."

12 The whole group answered, shouting loudly, "Yes, we must do what you have said." **13** **Then one of them said,** "But we are a very large group, and it is raining hard. We cannot continue to stand outside in this rain. Also, since many of us have committed this sin, it will take a long time to make things right again. **14** So please allow our leaders to decide what we should all do. Tell everyone in each city who has married a woman who is not an Israelite to come at a time that you decide. They should each come with the elders and judges from their own city. If we do that, our God will stop being angry with us because of what we have done."

15 **Within the crowd,** Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah said that they disagreed with this plan. Then Meshullam and Shabbethai, a descendant of Levi, said that they agreed with Jonathan and Jahzeiah. **16** But **they were the only ones who opposed the plan; all of** the others who had returned from Babylonia said that they would do it. So Ezra the priest chose men who were leaders from each of the clans and wrote down their names. On the first

day of the tenth month these men met to investigate the matter. **17** By the first day of the first month **of the next year** they had finished determining which men had married women who were not Israelites.

18 They determined that some of the descendants of the priests had married foreign women. These included some descendants of Joshua the son of Jozadak and of his brothers. Their names were Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. **19** They solemnly promised to divorce their wives and they each offered a ram as a sacrifice to atone for their sins.

20 In the clan of Immer there were Hanani and Zebadiah.

21 In the clan of Harim there were Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah.

22 In the clan of Pashhur there were Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

23 The Levites who had married foreign women were Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (whose other name was Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

24 There was Eliashib the musician. Among the temple guards there were Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

25 This is a list of the names of the other Israelites **who had married foreign wives**:

In the clan of Parosh there were Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malkijah, and Benaiah.

26 In the clan of Elam there were Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

27 In the clan of Zattu there were Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza.

28 In the clan of Bebai there were Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

29 In the clan of Bani there were Meshullam, Malluk, Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal Jeremoth.

30 In the clan of Pahath-Moab there were Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah,
Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh.

31 In the clan of Harim there were Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,
32 Benjamin, Malluk, and Shemariah.

33 In the clan of Hashum there were Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai,
Manasseh, and Shimei.

34 In the clan of Bani there were Maadai, Amram, Uel, **35** Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi,
36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, **37** Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.

38 In the clan of Binnui there were Shimei, **39** Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,
40 Maknadebai, Shashai, Sharai, **41** Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, **42** Shallum, Amariah, and
Joseph.

43 In the clan of Nebo there were Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and
Benaiah. **44** All of those men had married women who were not Israelites. Some of those
women had borne children**, so when the men sent the women away, they also sent their children with them**.

NEHEMIAH

1

1 I am Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah. I am writing this account.

My story begins in the month of Kislev during the twentieth year of the reign of King Artaxerxes over the Persian Empire. I was in the capital city of Susa. **2** Hanani, one of my brothers, came to see me, along with some other people from the province of Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had escaped and remained in Judah many years earlier when soldiers had forced many Jews to go to Babylon. I also asked about the condition of the city of Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, "The Jews who escaped the exile and remained in the province of Judah are in a desperate situation. The Babylonian soldiers broke down the wall of Jerusalem to get into the city, and they burned down all of its gates. The people living there are defenseless."

4 When I heard about these things, I sat down and cried. I could not stop mourning for days. I went without food, and I prayed to the God who is in heaven.

5 I said, "O Yahweh, you are the God who is in heaven. You are the great and awesome God. You always keep your promises faithfully to those who love you and obey your commandments. **6** Now please pay careful attention and listen to my prayer that I am praying to you now, as I have been constantly, for the people of Israel, your chosen people. I must confess the sins that we, the people of Israel, have committed against you. Both I and my family have also sinned. **7** We have acted very wickedly toward you. Many years ago you gave us your Law through your servant Moses. But we have not obeyed your Law.

8 Please call to mind the promise that you made to your servant Moses. You told him, 'If you Israelites do not obey my commandments, I will take you from your land and make you live among the other nations. **9** But if you become loyal to me again and start obeying my commandments once more, then I will bring you back to your homeland of Judah. That is the place from which I chose to start making myself famous throughout the world. I will do this no matter how far you have been taken away.'

10 We are your chosen people, whom you rescued from slavery in Egypt. You did that easily because you are so very powerful. 11 O my Lord, please pay careful attention to my prayer and to the prayers of my fellow Israelites. We are eager to honor you. Please grant that the king will agree to the request that I hope to make soon." At that time, I was an important official who served the wine at the king's table.

2 1 I prayed like this for four months. Then one day in the month of Nisan, still in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, something happened. When it was time to serve the wine, I took some and gave it to the king. I had never before looked sad in his presence.

2 No one was supposed to look unhappy in the king's presence. But the king noticed that I did look sad. So he asked me, "Why are you sad? I can tell that you are not sick. You must be unhappy about something." This made me very afraid.

3 I replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I hope you will live a very long time! I am sorry, but I cannot help being sad. I am sad because the city of Jerusalem, the place where my ancestors are buried, lies in ruins. Our enemies have burned down its gates."

4 The king replied to me, "What do you want me to do for you?" Before I answered him, I prayed to the God who is in heaven.

5 Then I replied to the king, "If it seems like a good idea to you, and if you are pleased with me, then please allow me to go to Judah, to Jerusalem. I would like to help my people rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."

6 I was able to speak freely because this was a private meal, with the queen sitting next to the king. The king asked me, "How long would you be away?" I told him how long I would be gone. That was acceptable to him, and he gave me permission to go. So I told him what day I wanted to leave.

7 I also said to the king, "If it seems like a good idea to you, please give me letters that I can show to the governors of the province Beyond the River. In these letters, please tell them to give me safe passage through their province to Judah. 8 Please also write a letter for me to Asaph, the man who takes care of your royal forest in that area. Please tell him to give me

timber to make the beams to support the gates of the fortress that is near the temple. Please also tell him to give me timber for the city wall and for the house that I will live in."

God was with me and helping me, and so the king agreed to all of my requests.

9 When I left to travel to Judah, the king sent along some army officers and soldiers riding on horses to protect me. When I reached the province Beyond the River, I went to see its governors. I showed them the letters the king had given me, and they gave me safe passage.

10 One of the people I showed my letters to was Sanballat the Horonite. He was the governor of Samaria, the area right next to Judah. He and his deputy, Tobiah the Ammonite, became very upset when they learned that someone had come to help the people of Israel. They did not want to see Judah become strong again, because that would be a threat to Samaria. **11** But I made it safely to Jerusalem despite their opposition. I stayed there for three days,

12 I did not say publicly what God was leading me to do for Jerusalem. Instead, I got up secretly in the night to inspect the city walls. I brought only a few other men with me. So that we could work quietly, the only animal I brought with me was the one that I was riding.

13 That night we went out through the Valley Gate and went past the Dragon Well to the Rubbish Gate. We made a careful inspection of the walls of Jerusalem. We noted where our enemies had broken down the walls, and where they had burned up the wooden gates. **14** Then we came to the Fountain Gate and the Royal Pool. The opening there was so narrow that the animal I was riding could not get through. **15** So we followed the path of the Kidron Brook, even though it was night. From there we were able to look up at the wall and see its condition. This route brought us back to where we started. We re-entered the city through the Valley Gate, and I went back home without being seen.

16 The city officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing. To that point I had not said anything about it to the Jewish leaders, the priests, the leading citizens, or the city officials. I had not approached anyone about doing the work of rebuilding the walls.

17 But now I said to them, "You see what a desperate situation we are in. You see that Jerusalem lies in ruins, and our enemies have burned down its gates. We need to do something about this! I challenge all of you to join me in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Then we will not

have to feel ashamed any more.” **18** Then I told them how God had been with me and had been helping me. I also told them how the king had given me permission to come.

When they heard this, they said, “Let’s get going and start building!” They encouraged one another **and committed themselves** to the project.

19 Then Sanballat the Horonite, his deputy Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian heard **that we had started to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem**. They ridiculed us mercilessly. They said, “What you are doing is not going to amount to anything! **But** you should not be rebelling against the king **like that**!”

20 But I answered them **firmly**. I said, “The God who is in heaven is the one who will enable us to complete this project. We are his chosen people. We are going to start rebuilding. But you have absolutely nothing to do with what happens in Jerusalem.”

3

1 **These are the names of the people who helped to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.**

Eliashib the Supreme Priest and his fellow priests began by rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They dedicated this gate **to God, as a symbolic way of dedicating the entire wall.** Then they set the doors of the Sheep Gate in place. They rebuilt the wall as far as the Tower of 100 Soldiers and **beyond that** to the Tower of Hananel. Then they dedicated that part of the wall **to God** as well.

2 Next to them, people from Jericho rebuilt **part of the wall**.

Next to them, Zaccur, the son of Imri, rebuilt **part of the wall**.

3 The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate. They framed it with **wooden** beams, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars **for locking the gate**.

4 Next to them, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, repaired **part of the wall**.

Next to him, Meshullam, the son of Berekiah and grandson of Meshezabel, repaired **part of the wall**.

Next to him, Zadok the son of Baana repaired **part of the wall**.

5 Next to him, some people from Tekoa repaired part of the wall. But the leading citizens of Tekoa were too proud to do the work that the leaders of Judah had asked them to do.

6 Joiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah, repaired the Old Gate. They framed it with wooden beams, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars for locking the gate.

7 Next to them, Melatiah from the city of Gibeon, Jadon from the town of Meronoth, and other men from Gibeon and from the city of Mizpah repaired part of the wall. They repaired it as far as the residence of the governor of the province Beyond the River.

8 Next to them, Uzziel the son of Harhaiah repaired part of the wall. He was one of the goldsmiths, the workers who made jewelry and other objects from gold.

Next to him, Hananiah repaired part of the wall. He was one of the workers who made perfumes. They rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

9 Next to them, Rephaiah the son of Hur repaired part of the wall. Rephaiah ruled half of the district of Jerusalem.

10 Next to him, Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired the part of the wall near his house.

Next to him, Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired part of the wall.

11 Malkijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section of the wall, along with the Tower of the Ovens.

12 Next to them, Shallum the son of Hallohesh repaired part of the wall. Shallum ruled the other half of the district of Jerusalem. His daughters worked with him on the repairs.

13 Hanun and some people from the city of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt the gate, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars for locking the gate. They also repaired 1500 feet of the wall, as far as the Rubbish Gate.

14 Malkijah. The son of Rechab, repaired the Rubbish Gate. Malkijah ruled the district of Beth-Hakkerem. He rebuilt the gate, he set its doors in place, and he installed bolts and bars for locking the gate.

15 Shallun the son of Kol-Hozeh repaired the Fountain Gate. Shallun ruled the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt the gate and put a roof over it, he set its doors in place, and he installed bolts and bars for locking the gate. Near the Pool of Siloam he also repaired the wall next to the royal garden, as far as the steps that went down from the City of David.

16 Next to him, Nehemiah the son of Azbuk repaired the wall as far as the place opposite the tombs in the City of David, to the reservoir that the people had made and the army barracks. Nehemiah ruled half of the district of Beth-Zur.

17 Next to him, some Levites repaired parts of the wall. One of them was Rehum the son of Bani. Next to them, Hashabiah, who ruled half of the district of Keilah, repaired a section of the wall on behalf of the people of his district.

18 Some other Levites repaired the next section of the wall. Next to them, Binnui the son of Henadad, who ruled the other half of the district of Keilah, repaired more of the wall.

19 Next to him, Ezer the son of Jeshua repaired another section of the wall. Ezer ruled the city of Mizpah. He started from a place in front of the steps that went up to the building for storing weapons, and he finished at the place where the wall bends slightly.

20 Next to him, Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section with great enthusiasm, from the bend in the wall as far as the door of the house of Eliashib the Supreme Priest.

21 Next to him, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of that house.

22 Next to him, some priests from the area around Jerusalem repaired a section of the wall.

23 Next to them, Benjamin and Hasshub repaired a section opposite their house.

Azariah, the son of Maaseiah and grandson of Ananiah, repaired the next section, beside his house.

24 Next to him, Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the bend in the wall as far as the bulwark. 25 Next to him, Palal the son of Uzai repaired a section. He began at the place opposite the bend in the wall where the watchtower is

taller than the upper palace that King Solomon built. That is near the courtyard where the guards live. Next to him, Pedaiah the son of Parosh repaired a section.

26 The temple servants who lived on Ophel Hill repaired the wall as far as the eastern side of the Water Gate, where there is a tall tower.

27 Next to them, the people from Tekoa repaired another section, from opposite the very tall watchtower as far as the wall at Ophel Hill.

28 A group of priests repaired the wall starting at the Horse Gate. Each one repaired the section in front of his own house.

29 Next to them, Zadok the son of Immer repaired the section in front of his house.

Then Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, who was the gatekeeper at the East Gate, repaired the next section.

30 Next to him, Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section.

Next to them, Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired the section opposite the rooms where he lived.

31 Malkijah, who was another one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section, as far as the building used by the temple servants and the merchants. That building was opposite the Appointment Gate. He rebuilt the wall as far as the upper apartments of this building, which were on the corner.

32 Some of the other goldsmiths, along with some merchants, repaired the last section of the wall from the corner apartments to the Sheep Gate.

4 **1** When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the city wall, he became furious, and he mocked the Jews.

2 He spoke to the other provincial officials and army officers. He said, “These weak Jews will not be able to accomplish anything! They will never restore the city! Their God will not

help them. They do not realize what a long time it would take to repair that wall. The only way they can get stones is by pulling them out of rubbish heaps. And the Babylonians burned the city, so those stones are probably weak anyway."

3 Tobiah the Ammonite was standing beside Sanballat. He made fun of the Jews by saying, "Right! The wall that they are building is so weak that if a fox walked across the top of it, it would fall down!"

4 When I heard about what they were saying, I prayed to God and said, "O our God, listen to the way they are mocking us! Make them fail in their attempts to stop us, so that other people will mock them! Allow their enemies to capture them and force them to go to a foreign land!
5 They are guilty, and they have sinned against you. Do not take away their guilt, and do not ignore their sin! I am asking this because they are also causing others to be angry at the people who are rebuilding the wall!"

6 But we kept building the wall, and after some time, we finished the wall around the whole city to about half the necessary height. Everyone was determined to accomplish this.

7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the men from the land of Arabia, the men from the nation of Ammon, and the men from the city of Ashdod heard that we were continuing to repair the wall of Jerusalem and to fill in the gaps, they became furious. 8 All of them together made a plan to come and fight against the people of Jerusalem. They wanted to make the people inside the city confused and divided. 9 But we prayed to our God to protect us, and we stationed lookouts on the walls at all times to watch out for them.

10 Then the people of Judah started saying, "The people who are carrying the stones are getting worn out. There is too much rubbish. We are not going to be able to finish rebuilding the wall."

11 Then our enemies started saying, "Before the Jews know we are coming, we will rush down on them and kill them and stop their work on the wall!"

12 And when some of the Jews who lived near our enemies came to Jerusalem, they pleaded with us repeatedly, "Let our men return home so they can defend us!"

13 But I put guards behind the wall at the places where it was low or where there were gaps. I also had people from each family group stand guard with their swords, spears, and bows and arrows. 14 After I had inspected everything, I summoned the leading citizens and the city officials and many of the other people, and I said to them, “Do not be afraid of our enemies! The Lord is great and awesome, so think about what he can do. And fight to protect your families, your sons and daughters, your wives, and your homes!”

15 When our enemies learned that we had found out about their plan, they realized that God had kept them from launching a surprise attack. They decided not to attack us. So we all went back to working on the wall. Each person continued doing the same work as before.
16 But after that, only half of my servants worked on the wall. The other half of them stood guard armed with spears, shields, bows and arrows, and metal armor. Officers stood behind the workers and guards to encourage everyone and to give orders in case there was an attack.
17 Those who were building the wall and those who carried the heavy loads always had their weapons with them so that they would be prepared to fight off an attack. 18 Each builder worked with his sword strapped to his side. I stationed someone next to me who would blow a ram’s horn if we needed a signal.

19 Then I said to the leading citizens, the city officials, and many of the other people, “We are working over a very wide area, and we are far apart from each other along the wall. 20 But wherever you hear the man sounding the ram’s horn, gather around us at that place. Our God will fight for us!”

21 So we continued to work on rebuilding the wall. Half of the men served as guards and kept their weapons ready at all times. 22 At that time, I also said to the people, “Each worker and his servant must spend the night inside Jerusalem and not go home if they live outside the city. That way the city will have plenty of defenders even at night, and they can still work on the wall during the daytime.” 23 During that time none of us took off our clothes. I did not, and my brothers, my servants, and my personal bodyguard did not. Each of us always had our weapons with us, even when we were washing ourselves.

5 1 Around this same time, many of the men and their wives complained bitterly about what their fellow Jews were doing to them.

2 Some of them began, “We have many children. We need to get a lot of food to feed them all.”

3 Others added, “We have had to promise to give someone our fields, vineyards, and houses if we do not pay back the money he has loaned us. We had to borrow the money to buy food during this time when food is scarce.”

4 Still others said, “We have had to borrow money to pay the taxes that the king commanded us to pay on our fields and our vineyards. 5 This is how bad things have gotten. We are selling our children into slavery. In fact, we have even sold some of our daughters. Our creditors took the fields and vineyards we pledged as security for loans, so there was nothing else we could do. But we are Jews, just like the people who are doing these things to us!”

6 I got very angry when I heard these things that they were complaining about. 7 I thought hard about what to do. Then I brought charges against the leading citizens and the city officials. I called together a large group of people to hear the charges against them. I told these leaders, “You are charging interest on loans to your fellow Jews. You know that is forbidden in the Law of Moses.”

8 I said to them, “Whenever our fellow Jews have had to sell themselves into slavery to people from other nations, to the best of our ability we have been buying them back. But you are actually selling your fellow Jews into slavery to get back the money they owe you. These are some of the very people we have been buying back!” They knew that these charges were true, so there was absolutely nothing they could say in response.

9 Then I said to them, “What you are doing is wrong! You certainly ought to obey God and do what is right! Otherwise, our enemies will mock us even more. 10 I myself, my relatives, and my servants have been lending money and grain to anyone in need without charging interest. All of us should stop charging interest on loans. 11 Give them back their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses. Do it right away! And pay back the 12% annual interest you have been collecting on the money, grain, wine, and olive oil that you have lent them.”

12 These leaders replied, “Yes, we will do what you say. We will give back their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses. And we will stop charging them interest.”

Then I called the priests, and I made the leaders swear to God in front of them that they would do what they had promised. 13 I also shook out the folds of my robe and said to them, "In this same way, may God fling anyone who does not keep this oath away from everything he owns. Yes, may that person lose everything!"

Then everyone who was there said, "We agree!" And they praised Yahweh. After that none of the Jews took houses or fields to guarantee loans, and none of them charged interest any more.

14 Here is something else I did to help the people. Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, had appointed me to be the governor of the province of Judah during the twentieth year of his reign. During the twelve years from the time that he appointed me until the thirty-second year of his reign, I did not accept the governor's food allowance, and I did not use it to feed my relatives. I knew that the people were poor and could not afford to pay for it. 15 The governors before me had made life very difficult for the people. They had demanded that the people supply them with bread and wine and forty silver shekels every day. Even their servants oppressed the people. But I respected and honored God, and so I did not oppress them. 16 I devoted myself to the work of rebuilding the wall. My relatives and I did not buy any property, even though we could have gotten it cheaply because the poor were so desperate. I also assigned all of my servants to work on the wall.

17 As governor, I was responsible for feeding 150 Jewish leaders and city officials. I also entertained Jewish visitors who came from nearby countries. 18 Each day I told my servants to prepare for us one ox, six good sheep, and various kinds of poultry. I paid for these myself. Every ten days I also brought in an abundant supply of various kinds of wine. But I knew that the people were struggling to survive, and so I paid for all of these things at my own expense. I did not accept the governor's food allowance.

19 My God, think of me, and reward me for all the good that I have done for the people of Judah.

6 1 Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arabian, and our other enemies learned that we had finished rebuilding the wall, and that there were now no more gaps in it. (However, we had not yet put the doors in the gates.) 2 So Sanballat and Geshem sent me a message that said, "We

want to arrange to meet with you in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." But I knew that they were saying this because they wanted to harm me.

3 So I sent messengers to tell them, "The work I am doing here is very important. I am not able to travel while it is going on. There is no reason for me to stop the work and leave it so that I can meet with you."

4 They sent me the same message four times, and each time I refused them for this same reason.

5 Then Sanballat sent one of his servants to me bringing the same request for a fifth time. This time the message was written, but it was not sealed. Sanballat left the letter unsealed so that others would find out what it said, because he wanted to pressure me to meet with him. 6 The letter said, "The people in the countries around us are saying, and Geshem confirms that it is true, that you and the Jewish people are planning to rebel against King Artaxerxes. That is why you are rebuilding the wall. They are also saying that you intend to become the king of the Jews yourself. 7 These people are also saying that you have appointed prophets to make a proclamation about you in Jerusalem. They are saying, 'The Jews now have a king of their own!' King Artaxerxes will certainly hear these reports, and when he does, he will be very angry with you. So we really should meet together and talk about this."

8 I sent a message back to him saying, "None of these things that you are saying are true. You are just making them up yourself."

9 I knew that they were all just trying to frighten us. They thought, "The Jews will become so afraid that they will stop working on the wall, and they will never finish rebuilding it." So I prayed, "O God, give me courage."

10 Around this time I went to visit Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel. I went to see him in his home, because he was not leaving his house. He was a priest, and he was trying to show that it was not safe for Jewish leaders to go out in public. He told me, "We are not safe even here. We need to go into the temple and lock the doors, because people are trying to kill you. One night they are going to come and kill you."

11 I responded, “I am not the kind of man who would run away! Besides, I am the governor, and everyone knows me, so I could not save my life by trying to hide in the temple. I refuse to do it!”

12 All of a sudden I realized that God had not given Shemaiah a prophetic message for me. Instead, he was saying these things because Tobiah and Sanballat had paid him to say them. 13 They had paid him the money specifically to say things that would scare me. They were hoping they could make me sin by abandoning my responsibilities and hiding in the temple. If I had done that, they would have ruined my reputation and discredited me.

14 So I prayed, “My God, treat Tobiah and Sanballat the way they deserve for what they have done. Do the same for the female prophet Noadiah and all the other prophets who are trying to make me afraid.”

15 We finished rebuilding the wall on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul, after working on it for 52 days.

16 When all of our enemies learned that we had completed the rebuilding in such a short time, they realized that our God must have helped us. This made the people in the countries around us lose all of their confidence. 17 During this time, the leading citizens of Judah were writing many letters to Tobiah to give him information about me, and he was sending letters back to them with instructions. 18 Tobiah was married to the daughter of a powerful and influential member of the community, Shecaniah the son of Arah. His son Jehohanan was married to the daughter of another powerful and influential man, Meshullam the son of Berechiah. And so, for those reasons, many people in Judah had sworn oaths to be loyal to Tobiah. 19 The people who were loyal to Tobiah would also come and tell me what good things he was doing, and then they would report to him everything I said in response. Tobiah also sent me many letters to try to make me afraid.

7 1 Once we had finished rebuilding the wall and we had put the doors in the gates, we assigned the gatekeepers and singers and Levites to their tasks. 2 I appointed two men to help me govern Jerusalem, my brother Hanani and Hananiah, the commander of the fortress in Jerusalem. I appointed Hananiah because he was trustworthy, and because he showed God more reverence and respect than most people do.

3 I told them, “Do not open the gates of Jerusalem until broad daylight. That way we will be
able to see anything our enemies are doing. Have the gatekeepers close the gates and put the bars
across the doors while they are still guarding the gates before they go home for the night.” I also
told them, “Have the men who live in Jerusalem take turns keeping watch in their own
neighborhoods.”

4 The city of Jerusalem covered a large area, but at that time not many people lived in the
city, and they had not yet built houses for themselves. 5 So as a first step towards filling
Jerusalem with people again, God led me to gather together the leading citizens and the city
officials and the other people living in the city to register them according to their family
histories. I also found a book containing the records of the first group of people who had
returned to Jerusalem from the exile. This is what those records said.

6 “These are the names of the people from Judah who returned home from exile.
Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had taken their ancestors away to Babylon. But they
returned to Jerusalem and to other places in Judah. They returned to the same towns where their
ancestors had lived.

7 The people who came back were following Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah,
Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

This is a list of the number of men from each Israelite clan who returned:

8 2172 men from the clan of Parosh;

9 372 men from the clan of Shephatiah;

10 652 men from the clan of Arah;

11 2818 men from the clan of Pahath-Moab, who are descendants of Jeshua and Joab;

12 1254 men from the clan of Elam;

13 845 men from the clan of Zattu;

14 760 men from the clan of Zakkai;

15 648 men from the clan of Binnui;

16 628 men from the clan of Bebai;

17 2322 men from the clan of Azgad;

18 667 men from the clan of Adonikam;

19 2067 men from the clan of Bigvai;

20 655 men from the clan of Adin;

21 98 men from the clan of Ater who were descendants of Hezekiah;

22 328 men from the clan of Hashum;

23 324 men from the clan of Bezai;

24 112 men from the clan of Hariph;

25 95 men from the clan of Gibeon.

26 Some other men also returned, whose ancestors had lived in these towns:

188 men from Bethlehem and Netophah;

27 128 men from Anathoth;

28 42 men from Beth-Azmaveth;

29 743 men from Kiriath-Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth;

30 621 men from Ramah and Geba;

31 122 men from Michmas;

32 123 men from Bethel and Ai;

33 52 men from a small town called Nebo;

34 1254 men from a small town called Elam;

35 320 men from Harim;

36 345 men from Jericho;

37 721 men from Lod, Hadid, and Ono;

38 3930 men from Senaah.

39 These priests also returned:

973 men from the clan of Jedaiah who are descendants of Jeshua;

40 1052 men from the clan of Immer;

41 1247 men from the clan of Pashhur;

42 1017 men from the clan of Harim.

43 These Levites also returned:

74 men from the clan of Jeshua and the clan of Kadmiel, all of them descendants of Hodevah.

44 148 members of the sacred choir also returned. All of them were from the clan of Asaph.

45 138 temple gatekeepers also returned. They were from the clan of Shallum, the clan of Ater, the clan of Talmon, the clan of Akkub, the clan of Hatita, and the clan of Shobai.

46 Some temple workers also returned. They were from the clan of Ziha, the clan of Hasupha, the clan of Tabbaoth, 47 the clan of Keros, the clan of Sia, the clan of Padon, 48 the clan of Lebanah, the clan of Hagabah, the clan of Shalmai, 49 the clan of Hanan, the clan of Giddel, the clan of Gahar, 50 the clan of Reaiah, the clan of Rezin, the clan of Nekoda, 51 the clan of Gazzam, the clan of Uzza, the clan of Paseah, 52 the clan of Besai, the clan of Meunim,

the clan of Nephushesim, [53] the clan of Bakbuk, the clan of Hakupha, the clan of Harhur, [54] the clan of Bazlith, the clan of Mehida, the clan of Harsha, [55] the clan of Barkos, the clan of Sisera, the clan of Temah, [56] the clan of Neziah, and the clan of Hatipha.

[57] Some descendants of the laborers that King Solomon first conscripted also returned.

These were from the clan of Sotai, the clan of Sophereth, the clan of Perida, [58] the clan of Jaalah, the clan of Darkon, the clan of Giddel, [59] the clan of Shephatiah, the clan of Hattil, the clan of Pochereth-Hazzebaim, and the clan of Amon. [60] Altogether, there were 392 descendants of the temple workers and conscripted laborers who returned.

[61] Another group also returned that came from the towns of Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Kerub, Addon, and Immer in Babylonia. But they could not prove that they were descendants of Israelites.

[62] These 642 men were from the clan of Delaiah, the clan of Tobiah, and the clan of Nekoda.

[63] Some priests also returned who were from the clan of Hobaiah, the clan of Hakkoz, and the clan of Barzillai. Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of a man named Barzillai from the region of Gilead. He had taken the family name of his wife. [64] These priests searched the records that contained the names of the Israelite ancestors, but they could not find the names of their families. They did not qualify to be priests because they could not trace their family history, so they were not allowed to have the rights and duties of priests. [65] The governor told them that they must not eat any of the share of food taken from the sacrifices and kept for the priests. They would have to wait until the priest in charge of the temple had begun his duties and could ask God what to do about this situation. [66] Altogether, 42360 people returned to Judea.

[67] There were also 7337 male servants and female servants, and 245 male singers and female singers.

[68] The Israelites also brought back from Babylonia 736 horses, 245 mules, [69] 435 camels, and 6720 donkeys.

70 Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans gave gifts for the work of rebuilding the temple.

The governor gave into the treasury more than 8 kilograms of gold, 50 bowls to be used in the temple, and 530 robes for the priests.

71 Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans also gave into the temple treasury for the work of rebuilding the temple a total of 153 kilograms of gold, and 1460 kilograms of silver.

72 And the remainder of the people gave a total of 153 kilograms of gold, 1330 kilograms of silver, and 67 robes for the priests." 73 So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple workers, and many ordinary people started to live in the towns and cities of Judea where their ancestors had lived. All these people were Israelites. By the seventh month all of the Israelites had gone to their cities and had started living in them.

8 1 A huge crowd of people gathered together in the plaza that was near the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the scroll of the law that Moses had written down, and which Yahweh had given to the people of Israel for them to obey its rules and commands. 2 Ezra the priest, who served God by offering sacrifices in the temple, brought out the law and presented it before all the people, to both men and women, and children who were old enough to understand what he read. He did this on the first day of the seventh month of that year. 3 So he read aloud from the book in the plaza that was near the Water Gate throughout the whole morning. He read it in front of all the people, both men and women and children who were old enough to understand what he read. And all the people listened carefully to the laws that were written on the scroll. 4 Ezra the scribe stood on top of a high wooden platform that the people had built for this purpose. At his right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. At his left side stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 Ezra stood on the platform above all the people so that everyone could see him. He opened the scroll, and as he did that all the people stood up.

6 Then Ezra praised Yahweh, the great God, and all the people lifted up their hands to show that they were praying with him. At the end of his prayer they said, "We agree!" Then they all bowed down with their faces touching the ground, and they worshiped Yahweh. 7 Then Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah,

Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, who were all Levites, explained the meaning of the laws of Moses to the people who were standing there. 8 They read clearly from the scroll of the law of God, and they explained what it meant, so that the people understood what Ezra and the others were reading.

9 Then the people began to cry from sadness when they heard what the law said. So Nehemiah (who was the governor), Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were explaining the meaning to the people, said to all the people, "Today is a festival day on which you are supposed to worship Yahweh your God. Do not mourn or cry!"

10 Then Nehemiah said to them, "Now go home, eat some good food, and drink something sweet. And share some of it with those who are not able to afford rich food and drink, because today is a holy day set apart to worship our Lord. So do not grieve, because the joy that Yahweh gives will strengthen you."

11 The Levites also told the people who were crying to stop, saying, "Today is a holy day! So, shhh. Do not grieve."

12 So all the people went home to eat and drink and share what they had. And they were very happy, because they understood the meaning of the words that Ezra had read and the others had explained to them.

13 On the next day, the clan leaders of all the people and the priests and the Levites met together with Ezra the scribe. They wanted to study carefully what was written in the law that Yahweh had given to Moses. They wanted to understand it better. 14 They learned that the law said that Yahweh had told Moses to command the Israelite people to live in shelters during a festival in the seventh month. This was so that they would remember that their ancestors had lived in shelters when they walked in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. 15 They also learned that they should publicly proclaim, in all their towns and in Jerusalem, that the people should go into the hills and cut branches. These should be from olive trees, wild olive trees, myrtle trees, palm trees, and shade trees. They must bring these branches and make shelters to live in during the festival. That was what the scroll instructed.

16 So the people went out of the towns and cut branches and brought them to make shelters for themselves. They built shelters on the flat roofs of their houses, in their courtyards, in the

courtyards of the temple, in the plaza near the Water Gate, and in the plaza near the Ephraim Gate. 17 All of the Israelite people who had returned from Babylon built shelters and lived in them for one week. Now the Israelite people had never celebrated that festival like this since Joshua the son of Nun led them into this territory. This was the first time they were doing it. And the people were very happy. 18 Every day during that week Ezra read aloud to the people from the scroll of the law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days. On the eighth day, they called for all the people to come together so they could hold a ceremony to bring the festival to an end. That was what the scroll instructed.

9 1 Two days later, the Israelite people gathered together again. To show that they were sorry for their sins, they went without food, they wore clothes made from rough cloth, and they put dirt on their heads. 2 The descendants of Israel separated themselves away from all the descendants of foreigners. They stood there and confessed their own sins and the wicked things their ancestors had done. 3 They stood in place and listened to someone read from the scroll of the law of Yahweh their God for three hours. Then for another three hours they confessed their sins and bowed down and worshiped Yahweh their God.

4 Some of the Levites stood up on the stairs, including Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, another man named Bani, and Kenani. And they cried out sorrowfully in a loud voice to Yahweh their God. 5 Then some Levites spoke. They were named Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah.

They said, “Stand up and praise Yahweh your God, who has always lived and will live forever! Yahweh, we praise your glorious name! Your name is more important than everything else that is good and wonderful! 6 You are Yahweh, and no one else. You made the heavens that are above everything, and all that lives in the heavens above the earth. You made the earth and everything that is on it, and you made the seas and everything that is in them. You are the one who causes all living things to be alive. Everything that lives in the heavens above the earth worships you.

7 You are Yahweh! You are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of the city of Ur, where the Chaldean people lived. You changed his name to Abraham. 8 You saw that he was faithful to you in his inner being. You made a promise to him pledged with blood, promising that you would give a land to him and to his descendants. This was the land where

the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites lived. And you did what you promised, because you always do what is right.

9 You saw how the Egyptians mistreated our ancestors in Egypt. You heard them cry out to you for help when they were beside the Sea of Reeds. 10 You knew that the leaders of Egypt were treating our ancestors very arrogantly. So you performed miracles for Pharaoh and his officials and all the people of Egypt. These proved you are the true God. You made yourself famous, and you are still famous! 11 You divided the sea in front of your people Israel, and they walked through the middle of the sea on dry land. But you drowned the soldiers of the Egyptian army under the waters. They sank as a stone sinks in deep water! 12 During the day you led your people by a cloud that looked like a huge pillar. At night you led them by a fire that looked like a huge pillar. It shone on the path in front of them to show them where they should walk. 13 When our ancestors were at Sinai Mountain, you appeared to them and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them honest instructions and trustworthy laws. You gave them good rules and commands. 14 You taught them about your Sabbath day of rest. It is set apart from the other days of the week. You gave commands and rules and laws for the people by your servant Moses. 15 When they were hungry, you gave them bread from heaven. When they were thirsty, you gave them water from a rock. You told them to go and take the land of Canaan, which you had promised with a vow to give them.

16 But our ancestors were proud and stubborn. They refused to obey what you commanded them to do. 17 They refused to obey you. They did not consider all the miracles that you had performed for them. They became stubborn and rebelled against you. They appointed a leader to take them back to Egypt, where they would be slaves again! But you are a God who forgives us. You act kindly and mercifully toward us. You do not become angry quickly. Instead, you faithfully love us very much. So you did not leave our ancestors alone in the desert. 18 Indeed you did not leave them alone, even though they made an idol for themselves that resembled a calf. They said about the idol, 'This is our god, who brought us up out of Egypt.' By doing that they insulted you greatly. 19 But because you always act mercifully, you did not leave them alone in the desert. During the daytime, the cloud that looked like a huge pillar above them continued to lead them in the way you wanted them to go. And during the night, the fire that looked like a huge pillar shone on the path in front of them to show them where to walk. 20 You gave them your good Spirit to instruct them. You continued to give them manna when they

were hungry, and you gave them water when they were thirsty. **21** For forty years you took care of them in the desert. During all that time, they had everything they needed. Their clothes did not wear out. Their feet did not swell up, even though they were continually walking. **22** You helped our ancestors to defeat the armies of great kings who ruled many people. By doing that, you allowed our ancestors to settle in every part of this land. They took over the land that King Sihon ruled from the city of Heshbon and the land that King Og ruled in the Bashan area. **23** You gave so many children to our ancestors that they were like the stars in the sky. You brought them into this land, which you had told their parents to enter and take for themselves so that they could live there.

24 Their children went in and took the land. You enabled them to defeat the people who were living there. They were the descendants of Canaan. You enabled them to conquer their kings and all the people who lived there. They were able to do whatever they wanted to those people. **25** Our ancestors captured cities that had walls around them. They took possession of fertile fields. They took possession of houses that were already full of all kinds of good things, and wells that someone had already dug. They took possession of many vineyards and groves of olive trees and fruit trees. They ate all that they wanted and became fat. They enjoyed all the many good things you did for them.

26 But they turned against you. They rejected your law. They killed the prophets who warned them that they should return to obeying you. They said and did very evil things against you. **27** So you allowed their enemies to defeat them. But when their enemies caused them to suffer, they called out to you. You heard them from heaven, and because you are very merciful, you sent them people to help them. Those leaders rescued them from their enemies.

28 But when there was a time of peace again, our ancestors again did evil things that you hated. So you allowed their enemies to conquer them and rule over them. But whenever they returned to you and cried out to you again to help them, you heard them from heaven. You rescued them many times, because you always act mercifully. **29** You warned them that they should return to obeying your laws again. But they became proud and stubborn. They would not listen to your commands. They sinned by disobeying your decrees, even though a person lives by obeying them. They purposely ignored what you commanded them to do. They became stubborn and refused to obey.

30 You were patient with them for a long time. You warned them by the messages your
Spirit gave to your prophets. But they did not listen to those messages. So again you allowed the
armies of the nations nearby to defeat them. 31 But because you act very mercifully, you did
not destroy them completely. You never left them alone. Yes, you are a very gracious and
merciful God!

32 Our God, you are great and mighty and awesome! You always fulfill your promises and
always faithfully love us! So now we are praying: Do not ignore all our difficulties. Consider all
the troubles that our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors, and all of your
people have experienced. We have been experiencing these troubles since the armies of the
kings of Assyria conquered us until now. We are still experiencing them today. 33 We know that
you have acted fairly in letting all these things happen to us. Yes, you have treated us as we
deserve. But we have done evil things. 34 In the past, our kings, our leaders, our priests and
our other ancestors did not obey your laws. They did not listen to your commands or the
warnings that you gave them. 35 They had their own kings. They enjoyed the many good
things that you provided in this large and fertile land that you gave them. But even then, they
did not serve you. They would not stop doing evil things.

36 Consider our situation! Today we live like slaves here in this land that you gave to our
ancestors. You gave them this land so that they could enjoy all the good things that grow here.
But consider us now! We are like slaves on this land. 37 The kings whom you have allowed to
rule over us are enjoying all the good things that grow here. This is because we have sinned.
They rule over our bodies and our cattle. They do whatever they please. We feel great distress.
38 Because of all this, we the Israelite people are making a solemn agreement. We are writing it
on a scroll. We will write down the names of our leaders, our Levites, and our priests. Then we
will seal the scroll."

10 1 These are the names of the people who signed the agreement:

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah; Zedekiah the scribe.

2 The priests who signed the agreement included:

Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, 3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah, 4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk,
5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, 6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, 7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
8 Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. Those are the names of the priests who signed the agreement.

9 The Levites who signed the agreement were:

Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui from the clan of Henadad, Kadmiel,

10 Some of their associates also signed the agreement, including: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita,
Pelaiah, Hanan,

11 Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah, 12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, 13 Hodiah, Bani,
and Beninu.

14 The Israelite leaders who signed the agreement were:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, and Bani, 15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, 16 Adonijah,
Bigvai, Adin, 17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, 18 Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, 19 Hariph, Anathoth,
Nebai, 20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, 21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, 22 Pelatiah, Hanan,
Anaiah, 23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, 24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, 25 Rehum, Hashabnah,
Maaseiah, 26 also Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, 27 Malluk, Harim, and Baanah.

28 The rest of the people joined in this solemn agreement. This included the priests, the
Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, and the temple workers. It also included everyone who
agreed only to worship and obey the God of Israel, along with their wives and their sons and
daughters who were old enough to understand what they were doing. 29 They all joined with
their leaders, who were important people, and together they all made a solemn agreement to
obey all the laws that God had given by Moses his servant. They agreed that they would
strictly obey everything that Yahweh our God had commanded, yes, all of his instructions.
30 This is what they promised to do: “We will not give our daughters in marriage to people who
live in this land who do not worship Yahweh. We will not allow our sons to marry their
daughters. 31 People from other groups who live in this land might bring merchandise and all
kinds of food to sell on Sabbath days. But we will not buy anything from them on a Sabbath
day or any other sacred day. Every seventh year, we will let the fields rest and not plant any

crops. That same year we will not make anyone pay back anything they owe to another person.
32 We each also agreed to a pledge that every year we would pay 4 grams of silver for the
supplies needed for the temple. 33 Here is a list of those supplies. The sacred bread that is placed
before God. The grain that is burned on the altar each day. The animals that are completely
burned up on the altar each day. The sacred offerings for the Sabbath days and for celebrating
each new moon and other festivals that God told us to celebrate. Other offerings that are
dedicated to God. The animals to be sacrificed to atone for the sins of the Israelite people.
Anything else that is needed for the work of taking care of the temple.

34 We have cast lots to determine when each clan of the priests, the Levites, and the rest of
the people will bring an offering of wood to the temple. Each clan will do this at an appointed
time every year. The Levites will use the wood to burn the sacrifices on the altar that belongs to
Yahweh our God. He commanded this in the law he gave through Moses. 35 We will also bring
an offering to the temple every year from the first grain that we harvest and from all the first
fruit that grows on all our trees. 36 We will also do something else that God commanded. We
will bring our firstborn sons to the temple for dedication, and our firstborn calves and lambs
and goats as sacrifices, to the priests who minister in the temple. 37 We will also bring supplies
to the priests that they can store in the temple. These will include the first grain that we harvest,
the first flour we make, the first fruit from all our trees, and the first wine and olive oil that we
produce. We will also bring 10 percent of our harvest to the Levites. We will allow them to
collect this 10 percent right in all the towns where we work. 38 A priest, one of the
descendants of Aaron, will be with the Levites and supervise them when they collect that 10
percent. Then the Levites must bring 10 percent of what they have received to the temple. The
priests will put it in the storerooms and it will support them. 39 That is how it will work. The
Israelites and the Levites will bring their offerings of grain, wine, and olive oil to those
storerooms. That is where the priests will store the equipment for the temple. And that is where
they will keep the food supplies for the priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers who are serving
at that time.

We promise that we will keep taking care of the temple."

11 1 So the Israelite leaders settled in Jerusalem with their families. The rest of the people
cast lots to select one family out of ten to live in Jerusalem. That was the city set apart for God.

The remaining nine families lived in the other towns. [2] The people asked God to bless all those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

[3] These are the names of the provincial officials who settled in Jerusalem. But in the towns of Judah, everyone lived on his own family property in their towns. This included the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of the servants of Solomon. [4] But some of the people of Judah and some of the people of Benjamin stayed and lived in Jerusalem.

Here are the names of the leaders who lived in Jerusalem.

From the descendants of Judah, one of them was Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez.

[5] Another one was Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Kol-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, who was one of the descendants of Shelah. [6] Altogether 468 men who were descendants of Perez lived in the city of Jerusalem. These men were very brave and skilled in combat.

[7] These are the descendants of Benjamin who decided to live in Jerusalem.

One of them was Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah.

[8] Two men who assisted him were Gabbai and Sallai. Altogether 928 people from the tribe of Benjamin settled in Jerusalem. [9] Their leader was Joel the son of Zichri. Judah the son of Hassenuah was the official who was second in command in Jerusalem.

[10] The priests who settled in Jerusalem included Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, and Jachin. [11] Another priest was Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub. He was in charge of the temple. [12] Another 822 of their associates settled in Jerusalem and performed work for the temple. Another priest who settled in Jerusalem was Adaiah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah. [13] Another 242 of his associates, including

the leaders of their ancestral clans, settled in Jerusalem. Another priest who settled there was Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer.
14 Another 128 of their associates who were strong men settled in Jerusalem. Their leader was Zabdiel the son of Haggedolim.

15 One of the Levites who settled in Jerusalem was Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni. 16 Two others were Shabbethai and Jozabad, who supervised the work outside the temple and were leaders of the Levites.
17 Another Levite who settled in Jerusalem was Mattaniah, who directed the temple choir when they sang the prayers to thank God. He was the son of Mika, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph. His assistant choir director was Bakbukiah. Another Levite was Abda, the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. 18 Altogether, 284 Levites settled in Jerusalem, the city set apart for God.

19 The gatekeepers who settled in Jerusalem included Akkub, Talmon, and 172 of their associates who kept watch at the gates.

20 The rest of the Israelite people, including the priests and the Levites, all lived on their own property in all the other towns in Judea. 21 The temple workers lived on Ophel Hill in Jerusalem; and Ziha and Gishpa supervised them.

22 The man who supervised the Levites who lived in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mika. Uzzi was one of the descendants of Asaph. These were the singers responsible for the music in the temple services. 23 Now the king of Persia had said that his kingdom would provide support for the singers. The king had said to give them whatever they needed to maintain the singing in the temple services.
24 Pethahiah was the ambassador to the king of Persia for any matter pertaining to the Israelites. He was the son of Meshezabel, who was one of the descendants of Zerah, the son of Judah.

25 Some of the descendants of Judah did not settle in Jerusalem. They lived in towns and villages near their farms. These included the city of Kiriath-Arba and its neighboring villages, the city of Dibon and its neighboring villages, and the town of Jekabzeel and its neighboring villages. 26 Some descendants of Judah also lived in the town of Jeshua, the town of Moladah,

the town of Beth-Pelet, 27 the town of Hazar-Shual, and the city of Beersheba and its neighboring villages. 28 Some also lived in the town of Ziklag, the town of Mekonah and its neighboring villages, 29 the town of En-Rimmon, the town of Zora, the town of Jarmuth, 30 the towns of Zanoah and Adullam and the nearby villages, the city of Lachish and the nearby farms, and the town of Azekah and the nearby villages.

All of those people settled in the territory of Judah, in the area between Beersheba in the south and the Valley of Hinnom in the north. 31 Some people who were descendants of Benjamin settled in these cities and towns: Geba, Michmas, Aija, Bethel and its neighboring villages, 32 Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, 33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, 34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, 35 Lod, and Ono the Valley of Craftsmen. 36 Some Levites who had previously lived in the territory of Judah went and settled in the land that had belonged to the old tribe of Benjamin.

12 1 These are the names of the priests and Levites who returned from Babylonia with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and with Joshua the Supreme Priest. The priests included Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, 2 Amariah, Malluk, Hattush, 3 Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, 4 Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, 5 Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, 6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah.

All those men were leaders of the priests, their associates, during the time when Joshua was the Supreme Priest.

8 The Levites who returned included Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah. Mattaniah and his associates led the people in singing songs to thank God. 9 Their associates Bakbukiah and Unni stood opposite them during the worship services and led a choir that sang responses. 10 Joshua the Supreme Priest was the father of Joiakim. Joiakim was the father of Eliashib. Eliashib was the father of Joiada. 11 Joiada was the father of Jonathan. Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

12 When Joiakim was the Supreme Priest, these priests were the leaders of their clans. Meraiah was the leader of the clan of Seraiah. Hananiah was the leader of the clan of Jeremiah. 13 Meshullam was the leader of the clan of Ezra.

Jehohanan was the leader of the clan of Amariah.

14 Jonathan was the leader of the clan of Malluchi. Joseph was the leader of the clan
of Shecaniah. 15 Adna was the leader of the clan of Harim. Helkai was the leader
of the clan of Meraioth. 16 Zechariah was the leader of the clan of Iddo.
Meshullam was the leader of the clan of Ginnethon. 17 Zichri was the leader of
the clan of Abijah. Piltai was the leader of the clan of Miniamin and the clan of
Moadiah. 18 Shammua was the leader of the clan of Bilgah. Jehonathan was the
leader of the clan of Shemaiah. 19 Mattenai was the leader of the clan of Joiarib.
Uzzi was the leader of the clan of Jedaiah. 20 Kallai was the leader of the clan of
Sallai.
Eber was the leader of the clan of Amok.
21 Hashabiah was the leader of the clan of Hilkiah. Nethanel was the leader of the
clan of Jedaiah.

22 Some scribes wrote down the names of the clan leaders of the Levites during the time when Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua were Supreme Priests. They wrote down the names of the clan leaders of the priests when Darius was king of Persia.

23 Scribes recorded the names of the clan leaders of the Levites in their record books up until the time when Johanan the descendant of Eliashib was the Supreme Priest. 24 Hashabiah, Serebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel were Levite leaders who directed one choir. Their associates stood opposite them directing another choir. The singers praised God and gave thanks to him, with one group facing the other. This was what King David, the man who served God faithfully, had instructed. 25 Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers. They stood guard at the storerooms near the gates. 26 They did that work during the time when Joiakim, the son of Jeshua and grandson of Jozadak, was the Supreme Priest. They did it again during the time when Nehemiah served as governor and Ezra served as priest and scribe.

27 When we dedicated the wall around Jerusalem, we summoned the Levites from all the places where they were living. We brought them to Jerusalem to assist in dedicating the wall by rejoicing and giving thanks and by singing accompanied by cymbals and harps and other stringed instruments. 28 We summoned the Levites who were used to singing together. They

came to Jerusalem from nearby areas where they had settled around the city. They also came from places around the village of Netophah southeast of Jerusalem. 29 They also came from three places northeast of Jerusalem, Beth-Gilgal and the areas around Geba and Azmaveth. We summoned those singers because they had built villages to live in near Jerusalem. 30 The priests and Levites performed rituals to make themselves acceptable to God. Then they performed similar rituals to purify the other people, the gates, and the wall. 31 Then I gathered the leaders of Judah together on top of the wall. I assigned them to lead two large groups that would march around the city on top of the wall, thanking God. As they faced the city, one group walked to the right toward the Rubbish Gate. 32 Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah marched behind that group. 33 The people who marched with that group included Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, 34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah. 35 Some descendants of the priests also marched with that group playing musical instruments. They included Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph. 36 Some associates of Zechariah also marched and played musical instruments. They included Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They all were playing the same kinds of musical instruments that King David, the man who served God faithfully, had told the Levite musicians to play many years previously. Ezra the scribe marched in front of this group. 37 When the people in this group reached the Fountain Gate, they went up the steps that were in front of them to the area known as the City of David. Then they went along the top of the wall past the location of the royal palace of David, and then to the Water Gate, on the east side of the temple. 38 The other group of those who were singing and thanking Yahweh marched to the left on top of the wall. I followed them with half of the people. We marched past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall. 39 From there we marched past the Ephraim Gate, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred Soldiers to the Sheep Gate. We finished marching near a gate that leads into the temple area. 40 Both of the groups reached the temple as they were singing and giving thanks. They stood in their places there. I was there with the half of the city officials who had come with me. 41 My group included the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah. All of them were blowing trumpets. 42 Others who were blowing trumpets included Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang with Jezrahiah who was their leader. 43 The people offered many sacrifices that day. They all rejoiced because God had made them very happy. The women and the children

rejoiced along with the men, so the sound of the celebration in Jerusalem was so loud that people far away could hear it.

44 On that day we appointed men to be in charge of the storerooms. That was where the priests kept the money and the food and the grain and the tithes. The people brought these things from the fields near the cities into the storerooms for the priests and the Levites, as Moses had commanded in the law. The people of Judah did all this because they were so happy about the priests and the Levites serving in the temple. **45** The priests and the Levites served God by performing rituals to purify things. The singers and the gatekeepers also did their work as King David and his son Solomon had declared they should. **46** We did all this because that was how it was in the days of old, when David was king and Asaph was in charge of the temple musicians. There was someone to lead the singers, and they sang songs to praise and thank God. **47** During the time when Zerubbabel was the governor, the people all contributed the food that the singers and temple gatekeepers needed each day. They did the same during the time when Nehemiah was the governor. They gave a tenth of their crops to the Levites, and the Levites gave a tenth of that to the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, the first Supreme Priest.

13 **1** Then someone read out loud to the people from a scroll that contained the law that God gave to Moses. They learned that the law said that no Ammonites or Moabites should ever join the Israelite people when they gathered together to worship God. **2** The law said this because the people of Ammon and the people of Moab did not give any food or water to the Israelites while they were traveling through their areas after leaving Egypt. Instead, they paid Balaam to get him to curse the Israelites. But our God turned that attempt to curse Israel into a blessing. **3** So the people obeyed that law. They sent away all the people whose ancestors had come from other countries.

4 When he became the Supreme Priest, Eliashib got control of the storerooms in the temple. Now he was related to Tobiah. **5** He allowed Tobiah to have a large room in which the priests used to store supplies. These included the grain offerings and the incense, the equipment for the temple, and the tithes of grain and wine and olive oil. God had commanded the people to bring these to the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers. This room had also held the offerings for the priests. **6** During that time I was not in Jerusalem, because in the

thirty-second year that Artaxerxes was the king of Babylonia, I had gone back to report to the king what I had been doing. After I had been there a while, I asked the king to allow me to return to Jerusalem.

7 When I arrived in Jerusalem, I discovered the evil thing that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by allowing him to use this room in the temple area. 8 That grieved me very much. I threw everything that belonged to Tobiah out of that room. 9 Then I commanded the priests to perform a ritual to cleanse that room and make it pure again. I also ordered the equipment for the temple and the grain offerings and incense to be put back in that room where they belonged.

10 I also learned that the singers and the other Levites who were responsible for the temple services had left Jerusalem. They had returned to their own fields because the people had stopped giving them 10 percent of their harvests, since Tobiah had occupied the storeroom. 11 So I rebuked the city officials. I told them, "You have neglected the work of the temple!" Then I brought the Levites and the singers back to the temple and told them to do their work again. 12 Then all the people of Judah started bringing their tithes of grain, wine, and olive oil to the temple storerooms once again. 13 I appointed some men to be in charge of the storerooms. They were Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah the Levite. I also appointed Hanan the son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah to assist them. I appointed these men because everyone knew that they were trustworthy and would distribute the offerings fairly to their associates.

14 "My God, please bless me for this. Yes, bless me for the good things that I have done for your temple and for the temple services!"

15 During that time, I saw some people in Judea who were working on the Sabbath day. Some were pressing grapes to make wine. Others were taking their grain and loading it on donkeys. Others were also loading bags of wine, baskets of grapes, figs, and many other things onto donkeys and bringing them into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. I warned them not to sell food to the people of Judea on Sabbath days. 16 I also saw some people from the city of Tyre who were living there in Jerusalem bringing fish and other things into Jerusalem to sell to the people of Judah on the Sabbath day. 17 So I rebuked the Jewish leading citizens. I said to them, "This is a very evil thing that you are doing! You are making the Sabbath day into something God never wanted it to be. 18 You know that your ancestors did these same things,

and God punished our nation by bringing great trouble to this city! But now you too are breaking the laws for the Sabbath day. You are going to cause God to be angry with the nation of Israel again. He will punish us even more!"

19 So I commanded the gatekeepers to shut the doors of the gates of the city when it started to get dark on Friday evening. I commanded them not to open the gates until Saturday evening. I also stationed some of my men at the gates so they would make sure that no one brought things to sell into the city in between those times, on the Sabbath day. 20 One or two times traders and merchants selling all kinds of things camped outside the city on the night before the Sabbath day. They were hoping to sell something the next day. 21 I warned them. I said to them, "It is useless for you to camp here outside the walls on Friday night. If you do this again, I will arrest you by force!" After that, they did not come on Sabbath days.

22 I also commanded the Levites to perform a ritual to purify themselves and then take up stations to guard the city gates. I wanted them to ensure that Sabbath days were kept holy by not allowing merchants to enter the city on that holy day.

"My God, please bless me for doing this too! And be kind to me, because you faithfully love us so abundantly."

23 During that time, I also learned that many of the Jewish men had married women from the city of Ashdod, and from the Ammonites and Moabites. 24 So half of their children spoke a foreign language, and they did not know how to speak Hebrew. They spoke whatever language their foreign parent spoke. 25 So I rebuked those men. I asked God to curse them. I struck some of them with my fists. I pulled out their hair. Then I forced them to make a solemn promise, knowing that God was listening. I made them promise that they would never again allow their daughters to marry foreign men. I also made them promise that they and their sons would not marry foreign women. 26 I said to them, "You know that Solomon, the king of Israel, sinned as a result of marrying foreign women who worshiped idols! You know that he was greater than any of the kings of other nations. God loved him, and God set him as the king over all the people of Israel. But his foreign wives caused even him to sin! 27 I am grieved to hear this about you! You have married foreign wives who worship idols. You have committed a great sin against our God!"

28 A man who was a son of Joiada and a grandson of Eliashib the Supreme Priest had married the daughter of **our enemy** Sanballat the Horonite. So I forced this man to leave **Jerusalem**.

29 "My God, these **men** have brought shame to the priesthood. **They have broken** the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. Punish them as they deserve!"

30 I took away everything from **the priests** that came from other nations and religions. I also established regulations for the priests and for the Levites **so they would know** what work each of them was supposed to do. **31** **I** also **arranged** for the people to bring their offerings of wood at the set times **to burn on the altar**, and to bring the first part of what they harvested **of each crop during the year**.

"My God, please consider that I **have done all these things**, and bless me **for doing them**."

Esther

1 [1] This is the story of something that happened during the time that a king named Ahasuerus ruled the land of Persia. The empire of this King Ahasuerus had 127 provinces and included all of the territory between India in the east and Ethiopia in the west. [2] At that time King Ahasuerus was ruling his empire from Susa, the capital city of Persia. [3] During the third year that Ahasuerus ruled his empire, he hosted a feast for all of his officials and for every important person who worked for him. He also invited the officers who served in the combined army of the kingdoms of Persia and Media, the wealthy landowners, and the officials of the provinces. The king was present in person to host the feast. [4] Ahasuerus entertained his guests fabulously because he wanted to demonstrate that his empire was extremely wealthy and that he was a very rich and powerful king. The feast lasted for six months.

[5] At the end of those six months, after that feast was over, the king hosted a second feast. This feast was for all of the people in the royal stronghold in Susa, including both rich and poor. He held this feast in the courtyard of his palace garden. It lasted for a whole week. [6] In the courtyard, white and blue curtains were hanging from white and purple cords attached to silver rings on marble pillars. The guests reclined on couches made of gold and silver. These were set on a mosaic floor that was made of red marble, white marble, and pearl bordered with black marble. [7] The attendants served wine in golden cups. The king was so rich that he had a great many of these cups, and no two of them were alike. The king had the attendants serve great amounts of his own royal wine to the guests. [8] Ahasuerus gave his guests a special privilege. He made the attendants who served the wine follow this rule: “No one has to drink if they do not want to.” All the guests could drink as little or as much as they wanted. [9] While the king was entertaining the men in the courtyard, Queen Vashti, his wife, was hosting a feast for the women. She hosted it inside the royal palace where King Ahasuerus lived.

[10] On the seventh day, when King Ahasuerus was feeling good from drinking wine, he called the seven castrated guardians who served him personally. (Their names were Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Karkas.) [11] Queen Vashti was a very beautiful

woman. Ahasuerus wanted the people and officials who served in the royal court to see how beautiful she was. So the king told his seven personal servants to bring Queen Vashti to him. He told them to have her wear her royal crown. **12** But when the guardians came and told Queen Vashti what the king had commanded, she refused to come. **The guardians reported this to the king, and** the king became very enraged. **13** It was the habit of the king to consult with certain advisors who knew the law and could make good decisions. So he spoke to those advisors, who knew the right way to do things. **14** The advisors whom the king relied on most were Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukan. These seven officials were from various places in **the kingdoms of** Persia and Media. They advised the king personally. They were the most powerful officials in the empire. **15** The king said to them, "I sent those guardians to Queen Vashti with a command, but she did not obey me. According to the law, what should we do with her?"

16 Then Memukan answered the king, **speaking loud enough that** both he and his officials could hear. He said, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, and not only against the king. She has also done wrong against all the officials and people groups in all the provinces that King Ahasuerus rules! **17** This is what will happen. Women all over the empire will hear about what the queen did. They will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded his servants to bring Queen Vashti to him, but she did not come! **So if even the queen can disobey the king, why should I have to obey my husband?**' Then women will stop respecting their husbands. **18** Even today, the leading women of Persia and Media will hear what the queen did. They will start to disobey **their husbands, even though they are** officials of the king. They will treat them with disrespect, and this will make their husbands angry with them. That will be bad enough by itself, **even if the news does not spread any farther**. **19** If it pleases you **to do so**, O king, you should personally issue a royal decree and have scribes add it to the laws of Persia and Media, which no one can change. **This decree should say** that Vashti can never come into your presence again. Then you should choose a different woman to be your queen, one who will obey you. **20** That way, even though your empire is very large, everyone in it will hear about your decree **to punish Vashti for disobeying you**. Then all the women will respect and obey their husbands. This will be true of every husband in the empire."

21 This seemed like a good idea to the king and his officials. So King Ahasuerus followed the advice of Memukan. **22** The king sent letters to every province in his empire. He wrote to

every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. The letters said that men should be the masters over their wives and children. They also said that a husband should be able to give orders to his wife in his own native language **and that she should understand and obey**.

2 **1** Some time later, when King Ahasuerus no longer felt so angry, he started to miss Vashti. But when she disobeyed his command, he had made a decree that she could never come into his presence again. **2** So some of the young men who attended the king said to him, "**Your majesty, you should get a new wife** for yourself. You could tell your servants to look for young virgins who are very beautiful. **3** Also, you could assign officers in each province of your empire to bring every virgin who is very beautiful here to your capital city of Susa. They could stay in the harem for virgins under the custody of Hegai, the **castrated** royal guardian who takes care of the young women who live there. He could arrange for them to receive beauty treatments. **4** Then you could decide which young woman you liked the best, and you could make her queen instead of Vashti." The king liked what they suggested, so he did it.

5 At that time, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai living in the capital city of Susa. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. His father was named Jair, his grandfather was named Shimei, and his great-grandfather was named Kish. **6** Many years earlier, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had taken Kish away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon along with many other captives. Nebuchadnezzar took them away from Jerusalem at the same time that he took King Jeconiah of Judah away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon. **7** Now Mordecai was taking care of his cousin, who was an orphan. Her **Hebrew** name was Hadassah, and her **Persian** name was Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter. Esther was now a young woman, and she was exceptionally attractive.

8 And so this is what happened: Messengers went **throughout the empire** and proclaimed the new law that the king had spoken. At the same time, the officers **whom the king had appointed in each province** brought many **beautiful** young women to the capital city of Susa and put them under the custody of Hegai. He was the man who took care of the young women **who lived in the harem for virgins**. **Because Esther was exceptionally attractive,** the officers also brought her to the king's palace and put her under the custody of Hegai. **9** Hegai was very

impressed with Esther, and he treated her favorably. He quickly arranged for Esther to receive her beauty treatments and her allotment of food. He also chose seven female servants from the king's palace and assigned them to be her personal attendants. He also moved Esther and her attendants to the best rooms in the harem for virgins. **10** Mordecai had warned Esther that she should not tell anyone what people group she was from. So she did not tell anyone that she was a Jew or who her relatives were. **11** Mordecai wanted to know how Esther was doing and what was happening to her. So each and every day, he would walk around in front of the courtyard of the harem for virgins. That way he could ask people who were going in and out of the harem how she was doing.

12 Each young woman in the harem, one at a time, was going to **have sexual relations with** King Ahasuerus **and become one of his concubines**. But before her turn came, each woman received a full year of beauty treatments, using techniques that had been developed for women **in Persia**. This is how the beauty treatments were completed: For the first six months, **a woman's attendants would rub her body every day** with olive oil mixed with myrrh. For the next six months, **her attendants would rub her body every day** with perfumes and lotions designed for women. **13** This is the way that they would prepare a young woman to go **and have sexual relations** with the king **and become one of his concubines**. She could take whatever clothing and jewelry she wanted from the harem for virgins and wear them when she went to the king's palace. **14** The king's servants would bring her **to the king's private rooms** in the evening. The next morning, they would bring her to the other harem, the one for concubines. There a man named Shaashgaz would take charge of her, because he was the **castrated** royal guardian who took care of the concubines. **The young woman would live there for the rest of her life.** She would not go and see the king again unless he asked for her by name because he had enjoyed being with her.

15 Eventually, **the evening came when** it was the turn for Esther, whom Mordecai had adopted as his daughter, to go to the king. She was the daughter of Abihail, Mordecai's uncle. When Esther went to the king, she only asked for what Hegai, the royal guardian in charge of the harem for virgins, recommended that she should wear. Everyone who saw Esther was very impressed with her. **16** The king's servants brought Esther to King Ahasuerus in his royal palace during the tenth month of the year (the month of Tebeth), in the seventh year of his reign **as king of Persia**. **17** The king loved Esther more than any of the other women. He treated her more kindly and more favorably than any of the other young women **who had become his**

concubines. So King Ahasuerus put a royal crown on her head, and he made her the queen instead of Vashti. **18** Then the king hosted a great feast and invited all of his officials and servants. It was a feast to celebrate Esther becoming the queen. He proclaimed that this would be a time to celebrate for people in all of the provinces of his empire when they would not have to pay taxes, and he generously gave gifts to people.

19 Later, Ahasuerus had his officers bring more virgins to Susa. During this time, Mordecai was working for the king, and he sat at the king's gate. **20** Esther had still not told anyone what people group she was from, because Mordecai had warned her not to tell anyone. In fact, she continued to follow all of Mordecai's instructions, just as she had done when she was growing up in his house. **21** During that time, when Mordecai was doing his work at the king's gate, two of the king's guards who protected the doorway to the king's private rooms became angry with the king. They planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Their names were Bigthan and Teresh. **22** But Mordecai found out about what they were planning. He told Queen Esther about it, and she told the king. She explained that Mordecai had given her the information. **23** So the king's officials investigated Mordecai's report and discovered that it was true. So the king ordered his servants to hang those two men from wooden poles until they died. In the king's presence, the king's scribes recorded an account of this in the royal chronicles.

3 **1** Some time later, King Ahasuerus promoted one of his officials, Haman, the son of Hammedatha, who was a descendant of Agag. The king gave Haman a very important position, more important than any of his other officials. **2** The king wanted to show that he had given Haman an important position. So he commanded all of his other servants who were at the king's gate to bow down all the way to the ground to honor Haman whenever he walked by. But Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, because as a Jew he would not worship anyone except Yahweh. **3** The other servants at the king's gate saw that Mordecai refused to bow down, and they asked him, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" **4** Mordecai told them that he was a Jew, and that Jews only worship Yahweh. The other servants warned Mordecai every day that he would be punished severely if he kept disobeying the king and not honoring his most important official. But Mordecai still refused to bow down. So they told Haman about it to see if he would allow Mordecai to keep refusing to bow down because he was a Jew. **5** When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down to him, he became furious. **6** The other

servants told Haman that **Mordecai was not bowing down to him because** Mordecai was a Jew. So Haman decided it would not be enough just to kill Mordecai alone. Haman decided that he would try to kill all the Jews in the entire empire of Ahasuerus.

7 So Haman had his servants cast a Pur (that is, a lot) while he watched **to determine the best month and the best day of the month to kill the Jews**. They did that in the first month, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year that Ahasuerus reigned **as king of Persia**. The lot selected the twelfth month of that year, the month of Adar, **as the time for Haman to carry out his plan**.
8 Then Haman went to King Ahasuerus and said, "Your Majesty, there is a certain group of people who live among the other peoples in your empire. They are in every province. They have their own set of laws, and so they do not obey your laws. It is not good for you to allow them to live in your empire. **9** If you approve of this plan, O king, then write a decree saying that all of the Jews must die. **When they are dead, we can take all of their goods, and from that** I will give 300 tons of silver to your administrators for them to put into your royal treasuries."
10 The king **liked what Haman said. So he** gave Haman the ring that he wore that had his official seal on it. **With that, Haman could make laws as if he were the king himself.** Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, had become the enemy of the Jews. **11** The king told Haman, "You can keep the money for yourself, and you can do whatever you want to do with those people."

12 On the thirteenth day of the first month of that same year, Haman called in the royal scribes, and he dictated a letter to them. He told them to send copies to the royal officials, the governors of each province, and the leaders of each people group. The scribes translated the letter so it could be sent to each province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. To show that he was sending the letter under the king's own authority, Haman sealed each copy of the letter with the ring that had the king's official seal on it. **13** Couriers delivered the letters to the officials in every province in the empire. The letters said to completely destroy all the Jews, including the children and women, on a single day. That was to be the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, **in that same year**. The letters also said that those who killed the Jews could take everything that belonged to them. **14** The letter told the officials to post copies where everyone could see them. That way all the people in every single province would know that the king had commanded this, and they would get ready **to do what the letter said to do** when the day came. **15** As the king had commanded, couriers rushed **with the letters to every province in the empire**. A herald also proclaimed what

the letter said in the capital city of Susa. The king and Haman relaxed and drank together. But everyone who lived in Susa was very upset about what was going to happen.

4 1 When Mordecai found out about Haman's plan to kill all the Jews, as signs of grief he tore his clothes and put on rough sackcloth and threw ashes over himself. Then he started walking towards the city center, towards the king's palace, crying out in anguish. 2 But no one who was wearing sackcloth was allowed inside the king's gate. So when Mordecai reached the gate, he had to stay just outside of it. 3 In every province of the empire, the letter that said to destroy the Jews was announced in public. When the Jews heard about it, they mourned greatly. They went without food and wailed loudly. Many of them also put on sackcloth and threw ashes on themselves and lay on the ground. 4 Esther's female attendants came with her guardians and told her that Mordecai was sitting outside the gate wearing sackcloth. When she heard about this, Queen Esther herself became very afraid. She sent Mordecai some good clothes to wear instead of the sackcloth, but he refused to put them on.

5 The king had assigned some of the royal guardians to Esther personally. So Esther called for one of them, a man named Hathak. She told him to go out and speak with Mordecai and find out why he was so distressed that he was sitting at the king's gate wearing sackcloth. 6 So Hathak went out to speak with Mordecai, who was in the plaza in front of the king's gate. 7 Mordecai told Hathak everything that Haman was planning to do to the Jews. He even told him how much money Haman said the king would get for his treasuries if the king commanded people to kill all of the Jews. 8 Mordecai also gave Hathak a copy of the letter that the heralds had read out loud in Susa and that said that people must kill all of the Jews. He told Hathak to show the letter to Esther so that she would know exactly what it said. He also told him to urge her to go to the king personally and to beg him desperately to save her people from destruction. 9 So Hathak returned to Esther and told her what Mordecai had said.

10 Then Esther told Hathak to go back to Mordecai with this message: 11 "There is a law about going to the king that applies to everyone in the kingdom, both men and women. If anyone goes into the inner courtyard of the palace, where the king can see them, and the king has not summoned them, that person will die. Only if the king holds out his golden scepter to them, then they will live. Everyone in the whole empire knows this law. So I cannot go and speak to the king as you have requested. The king has not called for me in over a month, and if I go

without being summoned, I could be put to death." 12 So Hathak went back to Mordecai and told him what Esther had said.

13 Mordecai told Hathak to tell this to Esther: "Do not imagine that just because you live there in the king's palace that you will be safe when they kill all the other Jews. 14 If you say nothing at all now, someone from some other place will rescue the Jews, but you and your relatives will not survive. Who knows, perhaps it was for just such a time as this that you became queen." 15 After Hathak told this to Esther, she told him to go back to Mordecai and say this to him: 16 "Gather together all the Jews who live here in Susa and tell them to fast for my sake. Tell them to not eat or drink anything for three days and three nights. My female attendants and I will also fast in the same way. At the end of the three days, I will go to talk to the king, even though doing that is against the law. I will do that even if it costs me my life." 17 So after Hathach told this to Mordecai, he went and did everything that Esther had told him to do.

5 1 After fasting for three days, Esther put on her royal robes, and she went and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, across from the king's house. He was in the royal palace, sitting on the royal throne and facing the entrance of the room. 2 As soon as the king noticed Queen Esther standing there in the courtyard, he was very pleased to see her. So he held out his golden scepter to her, to show that she could safely approach him. So Esther came up to the throne and touched the top of the scepter.

3 Then the king asked her, "Why have you come here, Queen Esther? What do you want? Tell me, and I will give you anything you ask for, no matter how great it is." 4 Esther replied, "If it pleases you, O king, please come with Haman today to the banquet that I have prepared for you." 5 The king said to his servants, "Go and get Haman and bring him quickly so that we can do what Esther has asked us to do!" So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther and her servants had prepared for them.

6 While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "Now please tell me what you really want. I will give you anything you ask for, no matter how great it is. I truly mean what I am saying." 7 Esther answered, "This is what I really want: 8 if you are pleased with me, and

if you are pleased, O king, to give me what I want, please come with Haman to another banquet that I will prepare for you tomorrow. I will answer your question then."

9 Haman was feeling very happy as he left the banquet that day. But then he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. Mordecai did not stand up to show respect for Haman or tremble fearfully in front of him. This made Haman furious with Mordecai. 10 But even though Haman was so angry, he kept himself from showing that he was angry. Instead, he went home and gathered together his friends with his wife Zeresh, 11 and he boasted to them about how rich he was and about how many sons he had. He also boasted about how the king had promoted him many times and given him a position above all of his important officials and other administrators. 12 Then Haman added, "And that is not all! I was the only one Queen Esther invited to come with the king to a banquet that she prepared for us today. And she has also invited only me to attend another banquet with the king tomorrow." 13 Then Haman said, "But I still cannot be happy as long as I keep seeing that Jew, Mordecai, sitting there at the king's gate and refusing to honor me." 14 So Haman's wife Zeresh and his friends who were there suggested, "Have your servants set up a pole 25 meters high. Then tomorrow morning speak to the king and tell him that you want to hang Mordecai on it. Then once you have executed Mordecai, you can go to the banquet with the king in a good mood." Haman thought that this was a good plan, so he told his servants to set up the pole.

6 1 That night the king was unable to sleep. So he told the young men who attended him to bring in the royal chronicles. One of the young men got the chronicles and began to read them out loud to the king. 2 The chronicles said that Bigthan and Teresh, two of the royal guardians who protected the doorway to the king's private quarters, had planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. The chronicles also said that Mordecai had discovered their plot and had let the king know about it. By doing that, Mordecai saved the king's life.

3 Then the king asked, "In what great way did I honor Mordecai for saving my life?" The young men who attended him replied, "No one did anything for him." 4 At that moment, Haman entered the outer courtyard of the king's house. He had come to tell the king that he wanted to hang Mordecai on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai. The king wanted to consult someone about the best way to honor Mordecai, so he asked, "Who is out in the

courtyard?” 5 The young men replied, “Our king, Haman is standing in the courtyard.” The king said, “Bring him in.”

6 When Haman came in, the king asked him, “What should I do for the man whom I would really like to honor?” Haman thought to himself, “Certainly I am the person whom the king would like to honor more than anyone else!” 7 Haman replied to the king, “If you really want to honor someone, 8 tell your servants to bring one of your own royal robes that you have already worn yourself. Have them also bring a horse that you have already ridden yourself and put a royal crown on its head to show that it belongs to you. 9 Then, on your behalf, have one of your most noble officials present the man with the robe and the horse. Have your servants clothe the man whom you really want to honor with the robe. Have them seat that man on the horse and then lead the horse through the public square of the city. Have them shout out to everyone in front of them, ‘The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!’” 10 The king liked this plan, so he replied to Haman, “Go quickly! Take the robe and the horse and do what you have just described for Mordecai the Jew. He is one of my servants who sits by the gate to the palace. Make sure that you do absolutely everything that you have said.”

11 So Haman did what the king commanded. He got the robe and the horse. He put the robe on Mordecai, seated him on the horse, and then led the horse through the public square of the city. As he did, he shouted out to everyone in front of him, “The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!” 12 Then Mordecai went back to his place at the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house, covering his head because he felt so humiliated. 13 Haman gathered all his friends together once again. He told them and his wife Zeresh everything that had happened to him that day. Some of his friends were also his advisors, and they and his wife Zeresh told him, “Mordecai has begun to defeat you. Since he is one of the Jewish people, you will not win against him. Instead, he will certainly defeat you.” 14 While they were still talking together, some of the royal guardians arrived to bring Haman quickly to the banquet that Esther and her servants had prepared.

7 1 So the king and Haman went to the second banquet that Queen Esther had arranged for them. 2 At that second banquet, while they were drinking wine, the king asked Esther again, “Now please tell me what you really want, Queen Esther. Tell me, and I will do it for you. I will give you anything you ask for, no matter how great it is.” 3 Then Queen Esther replied, “If you

are pleased with me, O king, I hope you will be willing to do what I ask. Please allow me to live, and please save my people. That is what I am asking for. **4** I am appealing to you because someone has turned my people and me over to our enemies, and they are going to destroy us completely. If someone had sold the men and even the women to be slaves, I would not have said anything about that to you, because that would not have been important enough to bother you, the king, with that."

5 Then King Ahasuerus responded to Queen Esther, "Who has done this? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?" **6** Esther responded, "The man who is our bitter enemy is this evil man Haman!" This made Haman terrified to be in the presence of the king and the queen. **7** The king became so angry that he got up and left the banquet of wine. He went outside into the palace garden to decide what to do. But Haman stayed inside to beg Queen Esther to save his life because he recognized that the king wanted to execute him. **8** As he was pleading for his life, Haman knelt down very close to Esther as she was reclining on a banqueting couch. When the king returned from the palace garden to the room where they had been drinking wine, he saw this. The king exclaimed, "He is even trying to rape the queen in my presence and in my own house!" As soon as the king said this, some of his servants covered Haman's face as a sign that he would be executed.

9 Then Harbona, who was one of the guardians who served the king personally, said, "O king! Haman has also set up a pole twenty-five meters high at his house because he wants to hang Mordecai on it. But Mordecai saved your life." The king said, "Hang Haman on it!" **10** So they hung Haman on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king stopped being so angry.

8 **1** That same day, King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther all the property that had belonged to Haman. He had been the enemy of the Jews. Esther told the king that Mordecai was her cousin and that he had been like a father to her. When he learned that, the king summoned Mordecai to come to him. **2** When the king sentenced Haman to death, the king took back from Haman the ring that had the king's official seal on it and the king was wearing it again. The king now took the ring off and gave it to Mordecai, to show that Mordecai would have the power to act with the king's authority. Esther also put Mordecai in charge of all the property that had belonged to Haman.

3 Then Esther came to speak to the king again. To show him how desperately she was pleading, Esther knelt down and put her face right on top of his feet. She cried as she begged him to stop the terrible plan of Haman the Agagite to destroy the Jews. 4 The king held out his golden scepter toward Esther, so she got up off the floor and stood facing the king. 5 Then Esther said, "Your majesty, if you think that it is the right thing to do, and if you are pleased with me, please write a new letter revoking the letters that Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, sent out. His letters said to destroy all the Jews everywhere in your empire. 6 I am asking this because I cannot bear to see the terrible thing that is about to happen to my people. They are my kindred. I cannot bear to see people destroy them."

7 King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "As you know, I have given to Esther all the property that belonged to Haman, and I had my servants hang Haman on a wooden pole because he wanted to kill all the Jews. 8 You also know that no one can revoke a letter that has my name and my official seal on it, such as the letter that Haman wrote. So this is what you should do. Write a new letter to help the Jews, as you think best. I give you permission to put my name on it and to seal the letter with the ring that has my official seal on it."

9 So the king sent for his scribes. They came and they wrote a letter saying everything that Mordecai told them to write. They wrote this letter on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan, in the twelfth year that Ahasuerus reigned as king of Persia. The letter addressed the Jews in the empire, but they also sent copies of the letter to the royal officials, and to the governors and leaders in each province. The empire of Ahasuerus had 127 provinces, extending all the way from India in the east to Ethiopia in the west. The scribes wrote to people in every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. They wrote especially to the Jews, in their alphabet and in their own language. 10 Mordecai signed each copy of the letter with the name of King Ahasuerus, and he sealed each one with the ring that had the king's official seal on it. Couriers on horseback delivered the letters. They rode fast horses that were only for the king's service. These horses were born in the king's own stables. 11 Each copy of the letter said that the king permits the Jews throughout the empire to join together and to fight to protect themselves. The king's letter also permits them to completely destroy any group of armed men from any people or province who would attack them. The letter also permits them to kill the women and children of those who would attack them, and to take the possessions of the people whom they kill. 12 The letter permitted all the Jews in every province throughout the empire to do this on a single day, the thirteenth day of

the twelfth month, the month of Adar, in that same year. 13 The letter told the officials in every single province to display copies of the letter where everyone could see them so that people would know that the king had commanded this, and so that the Jews would be ready to fight back against their enemies when the day came. 14 The king commanded the couriers to deliver the letters as quickly as possible. He sent them out on his own fast horses. The king's officials also proclaimed the new law and displayed copies of the letter in the capital city of Susa.

15 The king gave Mordecai special things to wear to show that he was now his most important official. He gave him a blue and white royal garment, a large golden crown, and a purple robe made of fine linen. Mordecai put these on and left the palace. When the people of Susa saw him, they shouted joyfully. 16 The Jews in Susa were very happy, and other people honored them. 17 In every single province and in every single city, wherever the couriers brought the letter announcing the king's decree, the Jews rejoiced greatly and had big celebrations. Many people from other groups in the empire became very afraid of the Jews, so they became Jews themselves.

9 1 On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of that year, the month of Adar, it was time for everyone to do what the letters from the king said that he had decreed for them to do. The enemies of the Jews had expected to destroy the Jews on that day. But just the opposite happened. Instead, it was the Jews who destroyed their enemies. 2 Throughout the empire, the Jews joined together in their cities to defend themselves against those who wanted to harm them. No one was able to fight back against them because everyone in the empire had become very afraid of them, so no one helped anyone who attacked the Jews. 3 All the leaders in each province, the royal officials, the governors, and everyone who worked for the king helped the Jews because they had become very afraid of Mordecai. 4 They were afraid of Mordecai because he was a very important royal official. Throughout the empire, everyone was hearing about how great he was because Mordecai kept becoming more and more powerful.

5 On the day when they were allowed to defend themselves, the Jews took their weapons and fought against all of their enemies. The Jews destroyed them completely. They were able to do everything that they wanted to do against their enemies. 6 In the capital city of Susa the Jews killed 500 men. 7 The Jews also killed the ten sons of Haman. The names of his sons were Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, 8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, 9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and

Vaizatha. **10** These were the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. The Jews killed them, but they did not take the things that belonged to them. **11** At the end of the day, someone came in and reported to the king how many people the Jews had killed in the capital city of Susa.

12 So the king said to Queen Esther, "Here in the capital city of Susa the Jews have killed 500 men, including the ten sons of Haman. In the rest of my empire, they must have killed many more than that! So, what else do you want? Tell me, and I will do it for you. I will do whatever you ask, so please tell me what you want." **13** Esther replied, "If it seems like a good plan to you, O king, then please allow the Jews who **live here** in Susa to do again tomorrow what you allowed them to do today. Also, command **your servants** to hang **the bodies of** Haman's ten sons on wooden poles." **14** The king did as **Esther** asked. He issued a decree **allowing the Jews** in Susa **to fight against their enemies again the next day**, and **he ordered his servants** to hang **the bodies of** Haman's ten sons. **15** And so on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, the Jews who **lived** in Susa joined together again and killed 300 **more** men in Susa. But **once again** they did not take the things that belonged to those men.

16 The Jews who **lived** in the other parts of the empire, who had joined together to fight for their lives **on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar**, had defeated their enemies and killed 75,000 of them **on that day**. But they did not take the things that had belonged to their enemies. **17** **After defeating their enemies** on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, they rested on the fourteenth day. They devoted the fourteenth day as a day to celebrate joyfully. **18** But the Jews who **lived** in Susa joined together **to fight against their enemies** on both the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month **of Adar**. They rested on the fifteenth day. They devoted that day to celebrating joyfully. **19** That is why the Jews who live in rural villages observe this holiday on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar **rather than on the fifteenth day**. They do this by celebrating joyfully and by giving gifts to one another.

20 Mordecai wrote down everything that had happened. Then he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the empire, everywhere that they lived. **21** He established **a holiday on** the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar. He told the Jews to observe it every single year **22** because those were the days when the Jews rested and no longer had to fight their enemies. That was the month when everything had changed for them. They had been deeply

distressed because their enemies were going to destroy them. But then they became very happy after they were safe from all their enemies. So Mordecai told them to observe those days with joyful celebration and by giving gifts to one another. Mordecai also told them that they should help the poor on those days. 23 The Jews were already celebrating those days that way. So they readily agreed to do what Mordecai had instructed them to do.

24 They would celebrate those days to remember how Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had tried to destroy them. He had thrown a Pur (that is, a lot) to find out what would be the best day to attack the Jews and destroy them completely.
25 They would also remember how Esther dared to come before the king even though he did not summon her. Then the king allowed Mordecai to send a letter throughout the empire saying that the king would make Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews happen to Haman instead. The king also ordered his servants to hang Haman on a wooden pole. When the Jews in Susa killed his ten sons, the king had his servants hang their bodies, as well. 26 The Persian word for "lot" is "Pur." That is why the Jews gave the name Purim to this celebration. Because of all of the amazing things that they had just experienced and because Mordecai then wrote to them to tell them to observe this holiday, 27 the Jews agreed to establish those two days as holidays and to observe them in the way that Mordecai had told them, on those specific days. They agreed that they and their descendants and everyone who became part of the Jewish people would celebrate this festival of Purim every year, forever. 28 So that is why every Jewish family in every generation since has celebrated these days as holidays, everywhere they have lived. The Jewish community and its descendants will always faithfully observe this festival of Purim.

29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with help from Mordecai the Jew, wrote a second letter about Purim. Because Esther was the queen, she was able to command the Jews to obey what Mordecai had written about Purim in his letter. 30 They sent copies of this second letter to all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Ahasuerus. It encouraged them that their situation was now peaceful and secure. 31 In this second letter, Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther confirmed that Purim should be celebrated on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar. They also confirmed that the Jews should continue the times of fasting and mourning that the Jews had established for themselves and their descendants. 32 Esther issued a decree establishing Purim as a holiday for the Jews, and the royal scribes wrote it down in the book of laws.

10 **1** Then King Ahasuerus imposed a tax **on everyone** throughout his empire, even **on those living** on the islands of the sea. **2** **The king's scribes** made a record in the royal chronicles of Media and Persia of all the great things that King Ahasuerus accomplished because he was so powerful. **They** also **wrote** there in a complete way the great **things that** Mordecai **did** because the king had promoted him to a very important position. **3** Mordecai the Jew was able to do so much because he was the most powerful person in the empire after King Ahasuerus. He was also a leader among his own people. All of his fellow Jews respected him. He worked **hard** to make sure that the Jews would always prosper.

Job

1 **1** In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. He was a man of complete integrity. He respected God and so he avoided doing evil things. **2** Now Job had seven sons and three daughters. **3** He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 1,000 oxen, and 500 donkeys. He also had many servants. Job was richer than anyone else who lived in the area east of the Jordan River.

4 Job's sons often held feasts in their homes. Whenever any of them held a feast, he would invite all of his brothers and sisters to share the meal with him. **5** After all of the sons had each held a feast, Job would gather his children together. He would ask Yahweh to cleanse them from any action they might have committed during their feasting that would have made them unacceptable to him. He would get up early in the morning, kill animals, and burn them on the altar **as sacrifices**, one for each **of his children**. **For** Job **always said**, "Perhaps my children have sinned by saying something evil about God in their thoughts. **If they have, I need to ask God to forgive them.**" Job did this after each time his sons had all hosted feasts.

6 One day the angels came and gathered together in front of Yahweh, and Satan came too. **7** Yahweh asked Satan, "Where have you just come from?"

Satan replied, "I have come from the earth, where I was traveling around **to see what was happening**."

8 Yahweh said to Satan, "Have you noticed Job, who worships me? I mention him because no one else on earth has such complete integrity as he does. He respects me and so he refuses to do anything evil." **9** Satan replied to Yahweh, "Job only worships you because of what you have done for him. **10** You have always protected him, his family, and everything he owns. You make him succeed in whatever work he does. As a result, he has built very large herds of livestock. **11** But if you attack what he owns and take it away, he will certainly curse you in front of everyone."

12 Yahweh replied to Satan, “All right, I permit you to take away everything that he has.
But do not harm him in his own body.”

Satan **agreed and then** left Yahweh **in order to carry out his attack on Job**.

13 One day after that, Job’s sons and daughters were attending a feast at the home of the
oldest brother. **14** **While they were doing that,** a messenger arrived at Job’s home. He told Job,
“Your oxen were plowing the fields and your donkeys were grazing nearby. **15** But a group of
men, Sabeans, came and attacked us. They killed all of your servants who were working in the
fields. They took away all the oxen and donkeys! I am the only one who has escaped to come
and tell you what happened.”

16 While he was still talking to Job, another messenger arrived. He said to Job, “Lightning
from the sky struck and killed all the sheep and all the men who were taking care of them! I am
the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened.”

17 While he was still talking to Job, a third messenger arrived. He said to Job, “Three
groups of robbers from the region of Chaldea came and attacked us. They stole all the camels
and killed all the men who were taking care of them. I am the only one who has escaped to
come and tell you what happened.”

18 While he was still talking to Job, a fourth messenger arrived. He said to Job: “Your sons
and daughters were feasting in the home of their oldest brother. **19** Suddenly a very strong
wind came from the desert and struck the house. The house collapsed on your sons and
daughters and killed them all! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what
happened.”

20 Then Job stood up and tore his robe and shaved his head **because he was very sad**. Then
he lay down on the ground to worship God. **21** He said,

> “When I was born, I was wearing no clothes.
> When I die, I will not take any clothes with me.
> It is Yahweh who gave me everything that I possessed,
> and it is Yahweh who has taken it all away.
> I find no fault with Yahweh.”

22 So in spite of all the things that had happened to him, Job did not sin by saying that what God had done was wrong.

2 1 On another day, the angels came again and gathered together in front of Yahweh. Satan also came again. 2 Yahweh asked Satan, “Where have you come from this time?” Satan replied, “I have come from the earth, where I was traveling around to see what was happening.”

3 Yahweh asked Satan, “Have you noticed that Job continues to worship me? I mention him again because no one else on earth has such complete integrity as he does. He respects me, and so he refuses to do anything evil. He still does this even though you persuaded me to permit you to attack him for no reason.”

4 Satan replied to Yahweh, “Job still worships you because he is glad you destroyed his herds and family rather than destroying him. People will give up everything they have in order to save their own lives. 5 But if you harm his body, he will certainly curse you in front of everyone!”

6 Yahweh replied to Satan, “All right, I permit you to harm his body. But you must leave him alive.”

7 Satan agreed and he left. He went and caused Job to suffer from very painful boils all over his body. 8 Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped the boils on his skin. He sat down in a pile of ashes outside the city.

9 His wife said to him, “You should not still be loyal to God! You should curse God and then go ahead and die.”

10 But Job replied, “You are talking the way people talk who do not know God. We should be willing to receive whatever God sends us.” So in spite of all the things that had happened to him, Job did not sin by saying that what God had done was wrong.

11 Job had some good and wise friends. One of them was Eliphaz from the town of Teman. Another was Bildad, who was a Shuhite. A third friend was Zophar from the town of Naamah. These men heard about the terrible things that had happened to Job. So they each left their

homes and went together to visit Job to comfort him sincerely. **12** But when they saw Job from a distance, they almost did not recognize him. They wailed loudly, they all tore their clothing, and they threw dust into the air that settled on their heads. **They did these things to demonstrate how sorry they were for Job.** **13** Then they sat on the ground with Job for seven days. **During that time** none of them said anything to him, out of respect for how greatly he was suffering.

3 **1** At the end of those seven days, Job started speaking. He cursed the day when he was born. **2** He said,

3 "I wish that the day of my birth had never existed!
I feel the same way about the night when my mother conceived me.
4 I wish that there would only be darkness on that day **so that it would not even be a day**.
I wish that God in heaven would not care about that day
and so not make the sun shine on it.
5 I wish that that day were only darkness,
with clouds blocking out the sunlight
and many other things also making it very dark.
6 I wish that the moon and stars would not shine on the night when my mother conceived me.
I wish that the day of my birth was not part of any month.
Indeed, I wish that it was not a day in the year at all.
7 I mean it—I wish that no mother would ever again bear a child on that date.
I wish that no one would ever again rejoice **over a child's birth** on that date.
8 There are magicians who know how to agitate the chaos monster. I want them to curse the day of my birth!
9 I wish that the stars that shone early in the morning of that day would never shine again.
I wish that it would never become light on that day.
I wish that not even the first rays of the rising sun would appear on that day.
10 I wish that day did not exist, because my mother gave birth to me on that day,

and because I became alive, I have now experienced all these terrible things.

11 I wish that I had died right after my mother gave birth to me!

I wish I had stopped breathing after being alive for only a short time!

12 I wish that my mother had never held me on her lap and nursed me!

13 If I had died shortly after my mother gave birth to me,

I would now be resting peacefully among all the other people who had died.

14 **I would be resting** with great kings and their advisers.

They built beautiful tombs on spacious grounds **and are now resting in them**.

15 Or **I would be resting** with princes

who owned great quantities of gold and silver.

16 I wish that I had died in my mother's womb

and never lived for even a moment.

Then people would have buried me privately.

17 After wicked people die, they do not cause any more trouble.

That allows the people whom they were oppressing to rest.

18 Those who were prisoners all rest peacefully **after they die**.

They no longer have slave drivers ordering them around.

19 Everyone, whether rich or poor, goes to the realm of the dead.

Those who were slaves no longer have to obey their masters.

20 God should not allow those who are suffering greatly like me to continue to remain alive!

God should not allow those who are very miserable to live!

21 They long to die, but they do not die.

They desire to die more than people desire to find buried treasure.

22 **God should not give life in the first place** to people who are very happy when they finally die!

23 God should not give life to people if he is going to keep them from knowing what to do

or from understanding what is really happening to them!

24 I am wishing that I were dead because now I cry so much that I cannot eat.

I just keep groaning loudly.

25 There were things that I always worried might happen to me.
Those things have now happened!
26 I really have no peace of mind at all.
My troubles keep disturbing me.”

4 **1** Then Eliphaz, Job’s friend from the town of Teman, replied to what Job had said.
Eliphaz said,

2 “Will you please allow me to say something to you?
I feel compelled to speak to you.
3 You yourself have given good advice to many people.
You have encouraged people who were discouraged.
4 When people were struggling, you were able to say the right thing to help them.
You enabled them to be brave again.
5 But now that you yourself are suffering, you have become discouraged.
You are not facing your troubles bravely **as you have helped others to do**.
6 You should be confident because you honor God.
You should be hopeful because you conduct yourself with integrity.
7 Think about this: God does not destroy people who are innocent!
No, God never kills people who are doing what is right!
8 I know from experience that this is true:
When people plan to do bad things to others,
those bad things happen to them instead.
9 God becomes very angry with them **because of the wrong things they plan to do**,
and so God commands that they will die, and they do die.
10 Wicked people may boast and threaten,
but God destroys them.
11 Those wicked people will have nothing in the end, like lions that starve to death
because God keeps them from catching any prey.

Different relatives will have to take care of the children of those wicked people, as if they were lion cubs whose parents caught no prey and they had to separate from each other in order to search for food.

12 I once heard a message that someone came and whispered to me.

13 One night I fell deeply asleep and had a dream that made me very perplexed.

14 I was so scared that I started to shake all over.

15 Then a spirit slid into view right in front of me!

This caused the hair on the back of my neck to stand straight up.

16 The spirit stopped there, but I could not see what it really looked like.

However, I knew that there was some being in front of me.

At first it did not speak, but then it said,

17 'No human being can be more righteous than God.

No person can be better than his Creator.

18 Consider this: God recognizes that even his own angels may not always do what is right.

If they do not act wisely, he corrects them.

19 So God is even more careful to discipline human beings,

knowing how very frail they are.

20 **Humans are so fragile that** they can be here today and gone tomorrow.

And humans are so insignificant that a person can die, never to return to earth, and no one will even notice.

21 Humans are **fragile,** like tents that collapse if someone pulls up their stakes.

And they may live their whole lives on earth without ever learning to be wise.'

5 **1** If you ask someone to judge between you and God, no one will agree to do that for you.

Not even an angel would have the authority or wisdom to judge your case.

2 People who do not respect God get angry with God **instead of considering how they have sinned**.

Naïve people resent God **when they do not get what they think they deserve**.

Their anger and resentment lead them to disobey God, so that God punishes them severely and even kills them.

So respect God and do not be naïve!

3 I have seen foolish people who seemed to be successful.

But immediately I recognized that they would not prosper for long.

4 Their children are never safe.

They always lose to their opponents in court

because no one defends them.

5 People who do not respect God are not able to harvest the crops that they plant.

Poor people come and claim the grain—right to the edges of the field!

Yes, poor people see their crops and are glad to have them.

6 After all, trouble does not come out of nowhere.

7 No, people cause trouble for themselves throughout their lives.

This is as certain as the fact that sparks shoot up from a fire.

8 If I were suffering as you are,

I would ask God for help

and trust God to help me.

9 God does great things that we can not understand.

We can not even count the marvelous things that God does.

10 God is the one who sends rain onto the earth

so that it waters our fields.

11 God defends people who are humble.

He gives widows safe places to live.

12 God keeps devious people from being able

to do what they plan.

13 When people try cleverly to make others suffer,

God makes this cause suffering for them instead.

When people try to trick others,

God shows that it is a trick before it can fool the others.

14 God keeps wicked people from knowing how to fulfill their plans.

It is as if the wicked people are always in the dark, even during the day,

and they need to feel around with their hands to try to find where to go.

15 When powerful people threaten or accuse weak people,
God rescues the weak people.
He keeps the powerful people from harming them.

16 **Because they know that God will help them,**
poor people can confidently expect that good things will happen to them.
God proves that they are innocent
when people accuse them falsely.

17 Consider this: Anyone whom God corrects is better off because of it.
So you should be thankful that God is disciplining you.

18 You should be thankful because
God allows people to suffer **in order to correct them**
and then he restores them.

19 Whenever you are in trouble, God will keep rescuing you.
God will keep bad things from happening to you.

20 When there is little food to eat, God will not allow you to starve to death.
When there is war, God will not allow your enemies to kill you.

21 God will protect you when people say bad things about you.
God will protect you from things that could badly harm you.

22 You will not worry about things like that
or about not having enough to eat.
You will not be afraid that wild animals will hurt you,

23 because you will be confident that those wild animals will not attack you.
You will not have big rocks in your fields that make plowing difficult.

24 You will know that things will go well for you in your home.
When you check on your animals, you will see that they are all there.

25 You will be certain that you will have many descendants.
They will be as numerous as blades of grass.

26 You will live a long life,
like grain that grows to become fully ripe before it is harvested.

27 I can assure you that my friends and I have thought carefully about these things.

We know that they are true,
so please pay careful attention to what I have said!
You also will realize that it is true."

6 **1** Then Job replied to Eliphaz and the others. He said,

2 "If I could put all my troubles and misery
on a scale and weigh them,
3 they would certainly be heavier than all the sand along the ocean shores.
That is why I spoke very rashly about the day when I was born.
4 It is as if Almighty God had shot me with arrows.
It is as if those arrows had poison on their tips and that poison had gone into my spirit.
The things that God has done to me are like soldiers lined up to attack me.
5 Just as a wild donkey does not complain by braying when it has plenty of grass to eat,
and an ox does not complain by bellowing when it has food to eat,
I would not complain if you were really helping me.
6 People use salt to help them eat food that has little taste.
People do that with the white of an egg, for example.
I have been saying how I feel in order to help me deal with my situation.
7 But regarding food itself,
I actually do not want to eat at all,
because my troubles are making me too upset to eat.
8 I wish that God would do for me what I have asked of him:
9 I wish that God would agree to let me die!
God is certainly able to end my life.
10 If he did that, I would be comforted:
I would know that in spite of the unrelenting pain I had suffered,
I would still always have obeyed God's commands.
11 I do not have the strength to endure until these troubles are over.

I have nothing to look forward to, so I do not want to live any longer!

12 I am not strong like stone,
my body is not sturdy like bronze,
so I will not be able to endure these troubles for a long time.

13 I am no longer able to help myself.
My troubles are keeping me from doing that.

14 When a man has many troubles, his friends should be kind to him,
even if he stops honoring Almighty God.

15 But you, my friends, have not helped me.
You are like streams in the wilderness
that travelers cannot depend on,
because they leave their channels empty in the dry season.

16 These streams are full of water
when the melting ice and snow make them overflow,

17 but when the dry season comes, there is no water flowing in those streams,
and the channels dry up.

18 Merchant caravans turn off the road to search for water.
However, there is no water in those stream beds,
so the merchants die in the desert.

19 The men in those caravans searched for some water
because they were sure that they would find some.

20 They were very disappointed,
because they had been sure that they would find water.
They traveled a long distance to the stream bed,
but there was no water in it.

21 Similarly, you three have not helped me at all!
You have seen that terrible things have happened to me,
and you are not helping me,
because you are afraid that God might do similar things to you.

22 **After I lost all my wealth,** I did not ask any of you to give me money.
I did not plead with any of you to spend some of your money to help me.

23 I never asked any of you to rescue me from my enemies.
No, I did not ask you to save me from people who were oppressing me.
24 Answer me now, and then I will be quiet;
tell me what wrong things I have done!
25 I would be willing to listen to what you had to say, even if it were painful, as long as it was helpful.
But though you are trying to correct me, you are not really helping me at all.
26 I am a man who has nothing to hope for,
but you try to correct me, and you think what I say is as useless as the wind!
27 In fact, you are treating me as callously as if you were gambling for an orphan
or arguing over the price of a friend you were selling into slavery!
28 Please look at me! I will not lie while I am talking straight to you.
29 Please stop saying that I have sinned! Stop criticizing me unfairly!
You should realize that I have not done anything wrong.
30 You must not think that I am lying!
I know what is right to say and what is wrong to say.

7 **1** Life is very difficult for all of us on this earth!
Like manual laborers, our days are long and hard.
2 We are like slaves who keep wanting to be in the cool of evening.
We are like workers who have to wait to be paid.
3 Like a slave, I am enduring a time when it feels useless to be alive.
I have been experiencing many miserable nights.
4 When I go to bed I say, 'I hope I will be able to sleep for a long time!'
But I never really get to sleep. I am restless right through to the morning.
5 My body is covered with maggots and dirt;
pus oozes out of my open sores.
6 I am running out of days faster than a shuttle releases yarn into a loom,
and I have no reason to hope that my life will end well.
7 God, remember that my life will soon end.
I do not think that I will ever be happy again.

8 God, you see me now,

but **after I die,** you will not see me anymore.

You may look for me then, but **you will not find me, because** I will not exist.

9 Just as a cloud never appears in the sky again once it fades,

so when people die and go to the place where dead people are, they never return to earth.

10 They never return and live in their houses again.

11 So I will say everything I want to say.

I will speak because I am so upset.

I will complain because I am so bitter.

12 God, you do not need to watch what I am doing so closely!

I am not a dangerous sea monster!

13 Sometimes I think that if I could just go to sleep, I would stop suffering;

my pain would be less while I was sleeping.

14 But then you make me have terrible nightmares!

15 And I wish someone would kill me by choking me

so that I would not have to stay alive **and suffer so much**.

16 I hate being alive **and suffering so much**!

I do not want to live any longer!

Stop afflicting me, because I will only be alive for a short time.

17 We human beings are not very important!

You should not think that we are so important that you need to pay attention to what we do.

18 You do not need to check every morning to see what we are doing!

You do not need to evaluate us at every moment!

19 I wish you would stop watching me

and leave me alone for at least a little while!

20 You watch me constantly,

but if I sin, that certainly does not harm you!

I feel as if I am your target and that you are shooting at me!

You act as if I am bothering you all the time!

21 If I have done wrong things, you could just forgive me.

I am going to die soon.

When I do, then if you decide you want us to be friends, it will be too late,
because I will be dead."

8 1 Then Bildad, Job's friend who was a Shuhite, responded to Job. He said,

2 "Job, you should not continue to talk like this.

You are saying a lot of things, but they are not sensible.

3 God always does things fairly.

Yes, Shaddai always does what is right.

4 Your children sinned against God.

This is evident, because God has punished them for the evil things they did.

5 But as for you, you should pray to God. Yes, you should ask Shaddai to help you.

6 If you are genuinely good,

then God will certainly do something good for you.

He will give you back the abundant prosperity that good people have.

7 God would make you so wealthy later in life

that it would seem as if you were not very prosperous before!

8 You should really consider the wise teachings of the people who lived before us.

Yes, you should think about what our ancestors learned about life.

9 I advise you to consider the wisdom of our ancestors

because we have only been alive for a short time

and we know very little.

This is because our time here on the earth is very short,

like a shadow that appears briefly and then goes away.

10 But if you consider the wisdom of our ancestors, you will learn useful things.

Indeed, you will learn very profound things.

11 Papyrus certainly does not grow away from marshland.

No, reeds certainly cannot grow where there is no water.

12 If their water dries up while they are blossoming,

they wither, while plants that do have water keep flourishing.

13 People who do not pay attention to God are like those reeds.
Such people hope for good things, but they do not get them.

14 Godless people confidently expect good things to happen to them, but those things do not happen.
Godless people trust certain other people to help them, but those others prove unreliable.

15 Godless people think they are secure because they are wealthy,
but ultimately they can not rely on their wealth for security.
When they begin to fail despite their wealth, they try to preserve their status,
but they fail anyway.

16 Godless people are like plants that formerly flourished in abundant sunshine,
whose branches once spread out over the ground.

17 Godless people are like plants whose roots once twisted securely around piles of stones
and clung tightly to rocks.

18 But a person can still pull a plant completely out of the ground even if it is that healthy and securely rooted.
Then it will be as if the plant was never there in the first place.
People who do not pay attention to God will perish just as completely.

19 So people who do not pay attention to God will be sad in the end.
Other people will come and take their places.

20 So I tell you, Job, that God will help you if you do what is right.
But God will not help you if you do what is wrong.

21 God can still make you happy,
yes, very happy.

22 **When God blesses you,** everyone who opposed you will be very ashamed.
God will completely destroy wicked people."

9

1 Then Job replied to Bildad and the others. He said,

2 “I certainly know that what you have said is true.

But a person can not prove that he has done the right thing

and that God should not punish him.

3 If someone wanted to argue with God about that,

God would ask him many questions

and that person would not be able to answer any of them!

4 God thinks very deeply and he is very powerful.

No one who has tried to argue against him has ever been able to win.

5 God moves mountains **in earthquakes** without anyone knowing in advance what he is going to do.

God knocks down mountains when he is angry.

6 God causes earthquakes far below the surface of the earth

that shake the ground and make it move.

7 On some days, God makes it so cloudy that people can not see the sun in the sky.

On some nights, God makes it so cloudy that people can not see the stars shining.

8 God created the sky all by himself.

God defeated the forces of chaos **so that he could make an orderly universe**.

9 God arranged the stars in the sky to make constellations such as the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades.

God arranged stars into many other constellations as well.

10 God does amazing things that people can not understand.

God does more marvelous things than people are able to count.

11 If God passed by where I was, I would not be able to see him.

Yes, he might be going by, but I would not notice him.

12 If God wants to take something away, no one can stop him from doing that.

No one can require God to defend what he is doing.

13 God would continue to be angry **even if someone tried to calm him down**.

No one can oppose him; he **even** defeated the forces of Rahab, the great sea monster.

14 So I could hardly think of the right words to say

in order to argue a case against God!

15 Even if I were innocent, I would not be able to argue a case against him.

All I could do would be to ask God, as my judge, to be merciful to me.

16 Even if he agreed to hear my case,

I would not believe that he was genuinely considering my arguments.

17 He keeps causing troubles that batter me.

He hurts me many times for no good reason.

18 He causes me to suffer all the time.

It is as if he will not even let me get my breath again **before he causes the next disaster**.

19 Suppose I did make a case against him. And suppose the winner would be the one who was stronger.

Then he would win, because he is far stronger than I am.

And it would not matter who was right,

since no one could make him obey what a judge decided.

20 Even though I was innocent, he would find grounds in what I said to punish me.

Even though I had not done anything wrong, he would still decide, based on what I said, that I was guilty.

21 I have not done anything wrong, **but that does not matter anymore because** I do not care what happens to me.

I do not care whether I live or die.

22 God punishes everyone the same way.

As I have been saying, God destroys everyone whether they have done wrong or not.

23 When people experience disaster and it causes them to die suddenly,

God laughs when he sees them suffer, even if they are innocent.

24 God has allowed wicked people to control what happens to everyone else.

It is as though God has caused judges not to be able to judge fairly.

If it is not God who has done that,

who, then, has done it?

25 I am approaching the end of my life more quickly than a messenger runs to bring
news.
It is as if the days of my life are running away from me.
Good things do not happen to me.
26 My life is going by very rapidly,
as fast as a sailing boat made from reeds,
as fast as an eagle swooping down to seize an animal.
27 If I decide that I will just forget what I am complaining about,
if I decide to stop looking sad and try to be cheerful,
28 I still become afraid again
because I know that God does not consider me innocent
and so I think that he will punish me.
29 He will condemn me anyway,
so why should I keep trying in vain to defend myself?
30 If I washed my body with pure water from melted snow
and cleansed my hands with strong soap
to show how innocent I am,
31 God would just throw me into a filthy pit **to show how guilty he considers me to be**.
My body would become so dirty that it would be as if my own clothes did
not want to be on it!
32 God is not a human, as I am,
so I could not refute him to prove that I am innocent
if we went together to have a trial in a courtroom.
33 There is no one to mediate,
no one who has authority over both of us.
34 There is no one who could keep God from causing me to suffer,
who could keep God from doing terrifying things that frighten me.
35 **If someone could protect me and judge between us,**
I would declare that I am innocent without being afraid of God.
But I can not do that now.

10 **1** I am tired of living,

so I will freely express everything I want to complain about **without worrying about what God will do to me**.

Yes, I will say exactly how unhappy I am.

2 I will say to God, ‘If you are going to punish me,

you should tell me what I have done wrong!’

3 You seem to think that it is all right to harm me

and to abandon me, whom you created.

But at the same time, you seem pleased to allow

wicked people to do the things that they plan to do!

4 Certainly you know and understand more than what people can see with their eyes! **So you should understand my true motives and know that I am innocent.**

5 You do not live for only a short time as people do!

6 So you do not need to act as if you would run out of time

if you did not discover all of my sins right away!

7 **You do not need to work hard to discover any sins that I may have committed,**

because you know that I am not guilty.

And there is no one who could help me get away from you **if you decided you should punish me**.

8 You personally created every single part of me.

So it is not right for you to destroy someone whom you created yourself.

9 Please recall how you made me! You molded me the way people mold objects out of clay.

If you destroy me, I will crumble into dust **and you will lose your marvelous creative work**.

10 You made me through a careful process,

the way people carefully make cheese out of milk.

11 You attached my bones together with tendons,

and then you covered them with flesh inside my skin.

12 You are the one who made me alive.

It seemed that you were faithfully taking care of me.

It seemed that you were protecting me.

13 But you kept secret what you were planning to do to me.
I am certain that you were planning to do these things to me!

14 You were watching me to see if I would sin
so that you could punish me for sinning.

15 If I am a wicked man,
then I hope that terrible things will happen to me.
But even if I am a good man,
I must still act ashamed
because you are punishing me as if I had sinned.

16 If I did act like the good man that I am,
you would conclude that you should punish me further
and you would hunt for me the way a lion hunts for some animal to kill.
When you caught me, you would do even more things to harm me greatly.

17 You would claim that I had committed even more sins.
You would become even more angry with me.
You would keep punishing me in new ways.

18 God, you should not have allowed my mother to give birth to me!
I wish that I had died at birth!
Yes, I wish that my parents had never shown me to anyone.

19 I wish that I had never even existed!
I wish that I had died at birth so that people had buried me right away.

20 I am not going to live very much longer!
So please leave me alone and let me have a little peace.

21 Let me have some peace now because
soon I will go to the place from which I will never return.
In that place where dead people go it is always gloomy.
Yes, it is very dark.

22 Yes, in that place it is very dark, the way it is in deep shadow.
Things are very chaotic there.
Even the small light that is there

is like darkness.”

11 **1** Then Zophar, Job’s friend from the town of Naamah, responded to Job. He said,

2 “I would like to respond to the long speech that you have just given.
You talk a lot about how innocent you are, but that does not mean that you truly are innocent.
3 You have boasted that you are innocent,
and I need to talk back in response.
You have said disrespectful things about God.
I need to tell you that you should be ashamed!
4 I need to correct you because you have told God,
‘I believe the right things,
and you know that I have done the right things.’
5 If only God would speak
and say something to correct you!
6 If only God would tell you the secrets that he knows because he is so wise!
You need to realize that God knows far more than you do.
If you could understand as God does,
you would realize that God is punishing you less than you deserve!
7 You will never be able to understand God by thinking hard about him.
No, you will never be able to find out everything about Shaddai.
8 God’s wisdom is so much greater than ours,
it is as if it is higher than the sky.
So there is nothing you can do to understand it all.
It is as if God’s wisdom is deeper below the earth
than the place where dead people go.
So it is impossible for you to know it all.
9 There is so much to know about God
that it is as if that knowledge is longer than the earth
and wider than the ocean.

10 If God wants to arrest you and put you on trial,
no one can stop him from doing that.
11 God is a trustworthy judge because he knows which people have bad character.
When God sees people doing wicked things, he punishes them.
12 Some people simply have no understanding.
They will become wise when humans start having wild donkeys as babies—
that is, never!
13 Job, I urge you to repent humbly
and pray sincerely to God.
14 If you have been doing evil things, stop doing them.
If you do nothing wrong in any part of your life,
15 then you will be able to act as a person who is not ashamed of anything.
You will be strong, and you will not be afraid of anything.
16 You will not be afraid, because you will forget all the bad things that happened to you.
They will all be gone, like the water that flows away down a river.
17 Your life will be happy again.
It will be as if the sun were shining on you as brightly as it shines at mid-day.
You have had many troubles, but they will end,
just as night ends when the sun rises.
18 You will feel safe because you will be confident that good things will happen to you.
You will think about your life and realize that you can go to bed and sleep peacefully.
19 You will lie down to sleep and nothing will scare you.
Many people will come and ask you to be kind to them.
20 But God will punish wicked people by making them die.
They will not be able to escape from God's punishment.
They will hope to live, but they will die anyway."

12 1 Then Job replied to Zophar and the others. He said,

2 “You are speaking as if you were the people to whom everyone should listen.
You seem to believe that you are the only wise people who are now alive.
3 But I have as much good sense as you do.
I am just as wise as you are.
People certainly know, in general, the things that you have said.
4 Before, when I prayed to God for help, God would help me.
But now, **because God is not helping me in my suffering,** other people laugh at me.
I am righteous and I honor God, but they laugh at me!
5 People like you who have no troubles think that others are suffering because of their sins.
You think that God is punishing us and that is why we are suffering.
6 Meanwhile, bandits get rich by robbing people.
Those who defiantly disobey God live peacefully.
Such people believe that God cannot stop them from doing what they want to do.
7 But if the wild animals could speak,
and if you asked them **what they know about God**,
they would tell you **that God is responsible when someone suffers as I am suffering**.
If the birds could speak,
and if you asked them **the same question**,
they would tell you **the same thing**.
8 If the ground could talk, and if you asked it about God,
or if fish could talk and you asked them,
they too would tell you that God is responsible when people suffer.
9 All of them certainly know that it is Yahweh himself who has caused me to suffer.
10 He controls whether all living creatures live or die,
including whether any person dies or continues to live.
11 We decide whether our food is good or bad by tasting it.

In the same way, we think carefully about what we hear people say in order to decide whether it is good or bad advice.

I have listened carefully to you, and I have decided that you are giving me bad advice!

12 Older people have usually become wise.

Because they have lived a long time, they have learned many things.

13 God himself is wise and very powerful.

He has good sense and he understands everything.

14 Indeed, if God tears something down, no one can build it back up again.

If God puts someone in prison, no one can enable that person to escape.

15 Yes, God is so powerful that if he prevents rain from falling, then the water on the earth dries up.

If God causes a lot of rain to fall, then water floods onto the land.

16 God is the one who is truly strong and wise.

He does not let anyone get away with doing wrong or with convincing others to do wrong.

17 **God is so powerful that** he can remove royal advisors from their positions,

and he can cause judges to become fools.

18 God can take away the ruling authority that kings have

and make those kings become slaves instead.

19 God can remove priests from their positions

and take the power away from those who have long ruled others.

20 God can cause trusted counselors not to know what to say,

and he can cause wise elders no longer to have good sense.

21 God can cause princes to lose the respect of others,

and he can cause those who are powerful to become weak.

22 God can enable people to understand

things that are very difficult to understand.

23 God causes some nations to become very great,

but later he destroys them.

God enables some nations to enlarge their territory greatly,

but later he allows others to conquer them and take their people away as prisoners.

24 He causes some human rulers to become foolish.

As a result, they try one thing after another without success,

as if they were lost in a desert without roads.

25 It is as if they were trying to feel their way in complete darkness.

It is as if they were staggering around drunk."

13 **1** "I can assure you, my friends, that I already know everything that you have been telling me.

Yes, I have heard and understood all that you have said.

2 I know everything that you know.

I do not know less than you do.

3 But I would like to speak with Almighty God**, not with you**.

I would like to convince him **that I am innocent**.

4 As for you, you are telling so many lies about me

that other people can hardly recognize what I am really like.

Your advice is so worthless

that you are all like doctors who sell people useless medicine.

5 I wish that you would just stop talking.

Then you would really seem to be wise!

6 Please pay attention to what I am telling you!

7 You are speaking on God's behalf,

but you are not telling the truth!

You are speaking deceptively,

but you think that you are helping God!

8 You are not being fair to me.

Instead, you are acting as if you are God's lawyers defending him in court!

9 If God investigates what you are doing,

he will find that you are doing wrong.

No, you can not deceive him

as you might deceive a human being!

10 God would certainly rebuke you when he discovered that
you were pretending to be fair but were actually being unfair.

11 He would certainly bring the full force of his power against you.
That would make you very afraid of him!

12 You are quoting traditional sayings,
but they have no value in my situation.
Your arguments in support of your position
are very easy for someone to refute.

13 So stop talking to me. Allow me to speak.
I do not care what God does to me as a result of what I say.

14 I will be risking my life.
I will be taking the chance that God will execute me for what I say.
But I have good reason to do that.

15 Indeed, God might kill me **for starting to argue a case against him**,
but I hope that he **would still judge me fairly after I die**.
So I am going to defend my behavior to him in person.

16 I believe that arguing a case against God
will actually help convince God that I am innocent.
After all, no wicked person would dare to approach God personally."

17 "God, listen very carefully to what I say.
Pay attention to me as I speak.

18 Please pay careful attention because I will be defending myself
by telling you things I have thought carefully about.
I have examined myself,
and I am convinced that I am innocent.

19 I do not believe that anyone could prove
that what I am going to say is false.
If I knew that it was false, I would not argue this case.
I would accept dying **as my fair punishment**.

20 However, I must ask you to stop doing two things to me.

Then I will be able to speak with you in person.

21 The first thing I ask is that you stop punishing me.

The second thing I ask is that you stop scaring me.

22 **If you agree to stop punishing me and stop scaring me, then**

go ahead and start questioning me, and I will respond.

Or allow me to question you first, and then you respond to my questions.

23 Tell me what I have done that is wrong.

Tell me what sins I have committed.

Show me how I have disobeyed you.

24 I do not understand why you are avoiding me.

I do not understand why you are treating me like your enemy.

25 I am as insignificant as a leaf that the wind blows,

so you do not need to punish me **as if I were a dangerous criminal**.

I am as unimportant as a bit of dry chaff,

so you do not need to chase me.

26 **From the way I am suffering, it appears that you are punishing me because**

you consider that I have done terrible things.

It seems that you are punishing me even for

the wrong things I did when I was young **and I did not know any better**.

27 It seems as if **you are judging me too strictly, as if** you had put chains on my feet **to keep me from going anywhere**.

It feels as if you are watching everything that I do very closely.

It is as if you will only let me do a few specific things.

28 **But you do not need to watch me so closely.**

I am a mere human being

with a body that is as fragile as rotten wood that is falling apart,

as fragile a piece of cloth that the larvae of moths are eating.

14

1 Human beings live only a short time,

and during that time they experience much trouble.

2 People live brief lives, like flowers that appear quickly but then wither and fall to the ground.

Yes, people's lives are temporary, like shadows that appear only for a short time.

3 God, you do not need to watch fragile humans so carefully.

You do not need to judge everything that I do.

4 No one can make something that is acceptable to God out of something that is not acceptable to him.

5 You have decided how many days each human life will last.

Yes, you have decided how many months each person will live.

No one can live any longer than the time you have decided.

Because this is true,

6 please stop watching people so closely.

Give them relief so that they can live out their brief lives in peace.

7 Now even after people cut a tree down,

it is possible for it to start growing again and make new branches.

8 Its roots in the ground may be very old,

and its stump may be decaying,

9 but when rain falls on it,

it may revive and send up shoots just as a young plant does.

10 But even the strongest people die.

They grow weak and stop breathing,

and then they are gone forever.

11 Just as water evaporates from a lake,

and just as a riverbed dries up,

12 so people die and do not become alive again.

Until the heavens do not exist any longer,

people who die will not come back to life.

No, no one will be able to make them alive again.

13 I wish that you, God, would put me safely in the place where dead people go and forget about me.

That way I would not suffer any more until you were no longer angry with me.

I wish that you would decide how much time I need to spend there
and then come and rescue me from that place.

14 I do not believe that we humans live again after we die.
If I knew that I would live again, I would wait patiently throughout this difficult life.
I would know that after I died, things would become different for me.

15 **After I had been in the place where dead people go for the time you had determined,**
you would call for me, and I would answer you.
You would be eager to see me, one of the creatures that you had made.

16 Yes, then you would protect me wherever I went,
and you would not be watching to see whether I sinned or not.

17 You would forgive the things I had done wrong.
Yes, it would be as if I had not done them at all.

18 But just as mountains erode away and rocks tumble down slopes,

19 just as water wears away stones and floods wash away soil,
so you make all people die, even though they hope to keep living.

20 You make us age the whole time we are living, and then we die.
Yes, you make our faces show that we are old and about to die,
and then you make us go to the place where dead people go.

21 When we die, we do not know whether our children will grow up and do things that will cause other people to honor them.
If they do shameful things instead, we do not know that either.

22 When we die, we feel sorry for ourselves, but no one else feels sorry for us.
Yes, we grieve for ourselves, but no one else grieves for us."

15 **1** Then Eliphaz, Job's friend from the town of Teman, replied to what Job had said. Eliphaz told him,

2 "If you were truly wise, you would not have said such useless things.
You have said a lot, but it has all been insignificant.

3 You should not be saying things that do not benefit anyone.
No, you should not speak things that are not helpful.
4 You are actually encouraging others not to respect God.
Yes, you are discouraging people from honoring him.
5 You are wicked, and that is why you say what you do.
You are talking in the way that deceptive people talk.
6 Everything that you say shows that God should punish you.
It is not necessary for me to prove that.
7 **You should not think that you know so much**
You were not the first person whom God created.
God did not make you when he first formed the world.
8 You do not listen as God makes his plans.
You should not think that you are the only person who is wise.
9 We know everything that you know.
We understand everything that you understand.
10 My friends and I are saying the same things
that old, wise people say,
people who were born before your father was.
11 God wants to comfort you
and speak gently to you,
but you do not appreciate that.
12 You should not be allowing yourself to become so emotional.
No, you should not be allowing yourself to lose your temper.
13 You have become angry with God,
and so you are saying harsh things against him.
14 No human being can be sinless.
No one on this earth can be completely righteous.
15 God does not even trust his own angels **to do the right thing every time**.
He does not consider the heavens to be completely pure.
16 So God certainly does not consider people to be pure who commit terrible wrongs,

who do evil deeds as often as they drink water.

17 Job, I want to explain **why you are experiencing so much suffering**.

Please listen to me.

I have learned many things,

and I want to explain them to you.

18 These are things that wise people have passed down from their ancestors.

These wise people have declared all these things openly.

19 God gave the land **of Edom** exclusively to my wise ancestors.

No one came from another country and caused them to think wrongly about God.

20 Wicked people suffer great pain the whole time that they are alive.

God has determined that this will happen constantly to those who oppress others.

21 Wicked people constantly experience terrible things.

They may become wealthy, but they will lose that wealth.

22 Wicked people lose hope that their troubles will ever end.

They are always afraid that they are going to die violently.

23 They have to go and search for food to eat. They do not know where to find it.

They know that they will certainly experience disasters soon.

24 Wicked people are always afraid that bad things will happen to them.

Their fear keeps them from taking actions that might protect them,

as if an opposing king had defeated them in a battle **and they had become helpless**.

25 These things happen to wicked people because they oppose God.

They think they are strong enough to defeat Shaddai.

26 Wicked people stubbornly oppose God

as if they had a strong shield to protect themselves against God.

27 But they are so fat that they would not be able to fight!

28 Wicked people have to live in cities that others have deserted.

They live in homes that others have abandoned.

Those homes are about to collapse into a pile of ruins.

29 Few wicked people become rich, and those who do become rich do not stay rich
for very long.

No, they do not acquire great wealth.

30 Wicked people will always be in trouble.

They will be like trees whose branches burn up.

When God gives the command, they will die.

31 Wicked people are often foolish and want to get things that are actually
worthless.

In the end, all they have are those worthless things.

32 While they are still young, they will die.

They are like branches that have broken off a tree and dried up.

33 Wicked people are like vines whose grapes fall off before they are ripe.

They are like olive trees whose blossoms fall off before they produce any
fruit.

34 Surely wicked people will not have any descendants.

Those who took money from bribes will not have any money left in the end.

35 They plan to cause trouble and to do evil things.

They continually think of ways to deceive other people."

16

1 Then Job replied to Eliphaz and the others. He said,

2 "I have heard many things like that before.

All of you, instead of helping me, are only causing me to feel more
miserable.

3 I wish that you would stop saying these things that are not helping me.

Eliphaz, I do not understand why you feel that you must keep replying to me.

4 I could say the same things that you are saying

if you were the ones suffering instead of me.

I could make great speeches to criticize you,

and I could shake my head at you **to ridicule you**.

5 I would think that I was encouraging you by what I said.

Yes, I would think that I was relieving you by speaking with you
6 But as it is, if I talk, I continue to suffer just as much,
and if I do not talk, that does not reduce my suffering either.
7 But now **I will speak to God**.
God, you have taken away all my strength,
and you have killed all of my children.
8 You have made me sick, and I have lost a lot of weight,
and people think that shows that I am a sinner.
They see how thin I am,
and they think that proves that I am guilty.
9 God is so angry with me that he has attacked me and hurt me.
Now he is moving his teeth back and forth because he is still so angry with me.
He is watching me closely **to see how he can attack me again**. **10** People look at me with their mouths wide open in order to humiliate me.
They hit me in the face because they think I have done wrong.
They crowd around me to threaten me.
11 God has allowed people who do not honor him to mistreat me.
He has allowed wicked people to do whatever they want to me.
12 Previously, I was living peacefully,
but then God caused great trouble for me.
It is as if he grabbed my neck and shook me to pieces.
It is as if he set me up as a target
13 and people were surrounding me and shooting arrows at me.
It is as if those arrows cut open my kidneys
and caused the gall from my liver to spill onto the ground.
God is not having any mercy on me at all!
14 It is as if I were a wall that God was breaking down in many places.
It is as if God were rushing at me like a soldier who was attacking his enemy.
15 **I am grieving so deeply that** it is as if I have sewn rough mourning cloth right onto my skin!

I feel weak and humiliated.

16 My face is red because I have cried so much.
I have dark circles around my eyes because I have not been sleeping well.

17 All this has happened to me even though I have not violently harmed anyone
and even though I pray sincerely to God.

18 I feel as if I am the victim of a violent crime, and I want people to show concern about what has happened to me.
I do not want anyone to stop me while I am demanding that God act justly toward me.

19 But even now, I know that there is someone in heaven who will testify for me.
He will confirm that what I have done is right.

20 This person in heaven is my friend,
and he will plead with God for me.
At the same time, I will also plead with God
so earnestly that I will weep.

21 My friend will plead with God for me in heaven
the same way one person pleads for another person here on earth.

22 **I want God to treat me justly now, while there is still time,**
because within a few years I will die.

17

1 My time to live is almost over. I have no strength left.
I am just about to die.

2 The people who are around me are continually making fun of me.
I have to watch them taunt me.

3 God, even though you would be trying my case,
please also guarantee to yourself that I will appear in court and behave as a defendant should.
There is certainly no one else who will do that for me.

4 My friends will not vouch for me,
because you have prevented them from understanding that I am innocent.
Nevertheless, you will not prove them right by declaring me guilty.

5 **I know that you will treat me justly because you make sure that people act justly.**

For example, you punish people who give false testimony against their neighbors in exchange for a bribe.

You make their whole families suffer if they do that.

6 But because God is punishing me,

people use my name to mean someone who was formerly prosperous but who experienced disaster because he was wicked.

People even spit in my face **to insult me**.

7 Because I am very sad, it has become hard for me to see.

My whole body has become so thin that it is as if I am not even here.

8 When people who are truly righteous see what has happened to me, it shocks them.

It makes them want to punish people who really disobey God.

9 Those who are truly righteous will continue to do what is right,

and those who are innocent will continue to become stronger.

10 But as for you friends of mine,

we could continue talking,

but I do not think that I will conclude that even one of you is wise.

11 My time to live has almost ended.

I have not been able to do the things that I planned to do.

I can no longer hope that the things I most desired will happen.

12 My friends say that the troubles I am experiencing are actually a good thing **because God is using the troubles to correct me**.

My friends say that because my troubles have become so bad,

that means they must nearly be over.

13 Suppose the only home I could hope to have was the place where dead people go.

Suppose I were going to stay in that dark place.

14 Suppose I considered the grave to be my family home,

and suppose I considered the worms that live in graves to be my family.

15 Then that would show that I truly do not have good things to hope for.

Everyone would recognize that I was not really hoping for anything.

16 It would be as if everything I hoped for were going to the place where dead people go.

Yes, it would be as if people were burying the things I have hoped for with me in a grave."

18

1 Then Bildad, Job's friend who was a Shuhite, responded to Job. He said,

2 "Please stop talking!

If you would stop talking and listen, we could tell you something.

3 You seem to think that we are as stupid as cattle.

4 But by being so angry, you are only hurting yourself.

You seem to think that everyone should abandon the earth because life on earth is no longer worth living for anyone after what has happened to you.

You seem to think that there should be a great earthquake **as a sign of what an awful thing has happened to you**.

5 But actually, what has happened to you is not momentous.

Wicked people are bound to lose their prosperity.

They will not continue to enjoy happiness.

6 It will be as if the light went out in the tent in which they were living,

so that they could not enjoy living there.

7 Wicked people become weaker **because of the troubles they cause for themselves**.

They try to take advantage of other people,

but they hurt themselves instead.

8 Yes, it is as if they walk into a net that they do not realize is there

or fall into a pit that someone has concealed as a trap.

9 It is as if their feet get caught in a trap

that does not let them go.

10 It is as if a loop of rope that someone has hidden on the ground

springs up and seizes them when they walk onto it.

11 Everywhere they go, things cause them to be terrified.

It is as if those things are pursuing them and biting at their heels.

12 They will become weak, as if they did not have enough food to eat.
They will always be at risk of disaster.

13 Diseases will spread all over their skin.
Yes, a horrible disease will cause their bodies to decay.

14 They have a secure life, but it ends suddenly.
They die without being able to do anything to save their lives.

15 Then all of their possessions will belong to other people.
Wicked people will have nothing left, as if God had burned up everything they had by making burning stones fall on it.

16 They will be lifeless, like trees whose roots have dried up
and whose branches have all withered.

17 No one on the earth will remember them anymore.
No, no one anywhere in the world will recall what they were like.

18 Suddenly wicked people will die and no longer be alive.
They will no longer be able to live in this world.

19 They will have no children or grandchildren living in their people group after they die.
They will have no descendants living where they previously lived.

20 Anyone who hears about what happened to them
will be shocked.

21 This is certainly what happens to unrighteous people.
Yes, this is what happens to people who do not honor God."

19

1 Then Job replied to Bildad and the others. He said,

2 "The three of you must stop hurting me
and discouraging me by saying that I am wicked!

3 You have insulted me repeatedly.
You should be ashamed for speaking so harshly to me!

4 Even if it were true that I had done wrong,

that would be my concern, not yours!

5 If you truly think that you are better than I am,
and if you are claiming that I must be guilty because I am suffering,

6 you should realize that it is God who has caused me to suffer.
It is as if he had a net and caught me in it, like an animal he wanted to trap.

7 Listen to me: I protest that God is punishing me unfairly,
but no one agrees with me.
I cry for help, but no one, not even God, treats me fairly.

8 It is as if God has blocked my road
so that I can not go anywhere.
It is as if God has forced me
to try to find my way in total darkness.

9 He has taken away my good reputation.
It is as if he has taken a crown of authority off my head.

10 He is ruining everything that I have.
I no longer hope to experience good things in this life.
I expect that I will soon die,
as if I were a tree that he had pulled completely out of the ground.

11 He attacks me because he is very angry with me.
He treats me as if I were his enemy.

12 It is as if he were sending an army against me
that has surrounded me and is getting ready to destroy me.

13 God has caused my family to abandon me.
Those who know me now act like strangers toward me.

14 My relatives have left me
and my good friends ignore me.

15 People who were guests in my house and even my female servants
act as if they do not recognize me.
They treat me like a foreigner whom they do not know.

16 When I order my servants to come, they do not obey.
I have to beg my servants to help me.

17 My wife stays away from me,
even though I was a good father to our children.
18 Even young children disrespect me.
When I stand up to talk, they laugh at me.
19 All of my intimate friends now detest me.
The people I love are hostile to me.
20 I have become so thin that my bones are visible beneath my skin;
I am barely alive.
21 I plead with you, my three friends, pity me
because God is making me suffer greatly.
22 You should not be making me suffer as well,
as if you were God and had to punish sin.
You seem to think that you need to keep accusing me of doing things wrong!
23 I wish that someone would now write what I have been saying
in a book **so that people could read it**.
24 **Or else,** I wish that someone would carve what I have said onto a rock with a chisel
and highlight it with lead so that people could always read it.
25 But I know that there is someone who will defend me
and that some day he will appear here on the earth and declare me innocent.
26 Even after I die and people bury me and my body decays,
still, in my body I will see God.
27 I will see him myself!
Yes, I will see him personally!
My emotions overwhelm me as I think about that!
28 But if you three men still think that you need to accuse me of doing wrong
because you believe I am responsible for the sufferings I am experiencing,
29 then you should fear that God will punish you,
because God becomes angry with unfair people like you and he punishes them.
When that happens, you will know that God punishes people fairly."

20 1 Then Zophar, Job's friend from the town of Naamah, responded to Job. He said,

2 "What you have said troubles me greatly,
so I want to reply to you right away.
3 You have insulted me by what you have said.
But I have had a good idea about how I should respond to you.
4 People have known this for a long time,
for as long as they have existed:
5 Wicked people are only briefly successful;
people who refuse to honor God are happy only for a short time.
6 They may seem for a while to be very great
and very powerful,
7 but they will disappear forever like refuse that people throw away.
People who knew them will wonder where they have gone.
8 They will disappear the way a dream ends abruptly when a person wakes up.
They will no longer exist.
Yes, they will vanish just like the dreams that people have at night.
9 Those who once saw those wicked people will never see them again.
Those wicked people will no longer live where they once lived.
10 They will have to return the valuable things that they stole from poor people.
If they die before they can do that, their children will have to do it.
11 Wicked people will die before they grow old
and others will bury them in the ground.
12 For wicked people, doing wrong things is like having sweet food in their mouths
that they want to continue tasting.
13 They do not want to stop doing wrong things,
as if those things were delicious food that they enjoyed eating.
14 **But they will regret doing those wrong things.**
They will feel like people who eat what they should not eat
and get a badly upset stomach

that feels as if it is full of poison.

15 Wicked people try to get as much money as they can but they do not keep it,
just as people who eat too much throw up the food that they ate.
God makes sure that they lose their wealth.

16 A person who does evil deeds will die as a result,
as certainly as the bite of a poisonous snake kills a person.

17 A wicked person will not experience the abundant blessings
that flow like a stream from God.

18 Wicked people will have to give back the things that they acquired dishonestly.
They will not be able to continue using those things.
They will not have the opportunity to enjoy the things they got by doing business,

19 because they oppressed poor people and refused to help them,
and they took other people's houses by cheating them.

20 No matter how much they got, they still remained greedy,
and as a result, they lost the things that they enjoyed having.

21 When they finish eating their food, there is never anything left over,
because they greedily eat it all.
That is why they do not remain wealthy.

22 While they are still very wealthy,
they will suddenly experience trouble.
Many people will be hostile to them and hurt them.

23 Even as wicked people are enjoying luxuries,
God will show that he is very angry with them.
He will punish them with great suffering,
even as they are indulging themselves.

24 Even as they are trying to escape from smaller punishments,
they will experience greater punishments.

25 It will be as if God had shot an arrow through a wicked person's body
and he had to pull it out of his back.
But the shiny point of the arrow would have cut a gash in his liver,

and he would know that he was going to die.

26 God has decided that he will destroy the valuable possessions that wicked people have.

It will be as if a fire that God starts will burn them up.

Yes, God will destroy every last thing that they have in their homes.

27 The sins that those wicked people have committed will become apparent.

If the sky could speak, it would tell all the wrong things it saw them do.

If the earth could speak, it would also be a witness against them.

28 On the day when God punishes people,

he will take away all the possessions of wicked people.

It will be as if a flood had washed them away.

29 That is what God will do to wicked people.

That is what God has decreed will happen to them."

21

1 Then Job replied to Zophar and the others. He said,

2 "Please listen carefully to what I say.

That is something that you can do to comfort me.

3 Be patient with me, and allow me to speak.

Then, after I have finished speaking,

you can continue to make fun of me if you wish**, although I hope you will not**.

4 I am not protesting to people about my suffering, I am protesting to God!

And so it is certainly acceptable for me to be impatient!

5 If you consider my situation, it will shock you.

That should make you put your hands over your mouths **and say no more**!

6 When I think about what has happened to me,

I am frightened and my entire body shakes.

7 I do not understand why wicked people live long lives

and become very powerful.

8 They live to see their children grow up

and start their own households nearby.

9 Wicked people live safely in their homes without being afraid.
God does not punish them.
10 Their bulls mate with their cows successfully.
Their cows give birth to calves. They do not miscarry.
11 Wicked people are able to send their young children outside to play **without worrying about what will happen to them**.
Their children dance playfully.
12 The children play tambourines and lyres **as they sing**,
and they also play flutes happily.
13 Wicked people enjoy having good things while they are alive,
and then they die peacefully and go to the place where dead people go.
14 While they are alive, they say to God, 'Leave us alone;
we do not care about how you want us to live our lives!'
15 Those wicked people also say, 'It does not matter whether we worship Shaddai.
We would not get any advantage by praying to him.'
16 Wicked people wrongly think that they have become prosperous because of what they have done.
I want to think completely differently from the way they think.
17 It often happens that wicked people die
without experiencing any disasters.
I do not think that God actually becomes angry with them and punishes them.
18 God does not destroy them like straw that the wind blows away.
It is never as if a whirlwind carries them off.
19 You say, 'When people have committed sins,
God remembers and punishes their children for those sins.'
I say that God should punish the people who sin, not their children.
That way sinners will know that God is punishing them for their own sins.
20 Wicked people should have the experience of God destroying them.
They should know what it is like for Shaddai to punish them in his wrath.
21 After all, once wicked people die,
they are no longer concerned for their families who are still alive.

22 Since God judges everyone, even those who are in heaven,

no one can teach him anything.

23 Some people die while they are still very healthy.

They die when their lives are peaceful and they are not afraid that bad things will happen to them.

24 Their bodies are fat.

Their bones are strong.

25 Other people are very miserable when they die.

They die before good things have happened to them.

26 Both kinds of people die, and other people bury them.

Their bodies all decompose.

Everyone dies, so it is clear that dying is not always the punishment for being wicked.

27 Listen, I know what you three are thinking about me.

You are wrongly applying to me things that are true about wicked people.

28 I know you are wrong because you say, 'God does not allow evil rulers to keep living!

God does not allow wicked people to keep living!'

29 If you want to know what life on earth is really like, you should ask people who travel much **and see many things**.

You will have to admit that the things they see and describe show what life is really like.

30 **Travelers will report** that wicked people do not suffer when there are great disasters.

They will report that wicked people escape from God's punishment.

31 No one dares to accuse wicked people openly of doing wrong.

No one punishes them for the evil things they have done.

32 When wicked people die, others carry their bodies to their graves in a solemn procession.

Then people guard their graves to protect them.

33 It would please wicked people to see how others build mounds over their graves to honor them.

It would also please them to see how many people take part in their funeral processions.

Many people walk in front of their bodies and many others walk behind them.

34 Since all of this is true about wicked people, what you have been telling me does not make sense, and it has not comforted me.

You have been trying to answer me by telling me things that are not true!”

22 **1** Then Eliphaz, Job’s friend from the town of Teman, replied to what Job had said. Eliphaz told him,

2 “No one can do anything to benefit God!

No, people can only do things to benefit themselves, and only if they are wise.

3 It does not give Shaddai any extra pleasure if you live in the way you are supposed to live anyway.

It does not make him better off if you improve the way you are living.

4 God would not be punishing you in this way if you truly honored him.

God would not judge you to be guilty for doing that.

5 No, God must be punishing you because you are very wicked.

You must have done a great number of evil things.

6 You must have unfairly forced poor people to give you things to guarantee that they would pay money back to you.

You must have taken the cloaks that they needed to keep them warm.

7 You must not have given water to people who were thirsty.

You must not have given food to people who were hungry.

8 You must have refused to help others even though you were a wealthy man who owned a lot of land.

You must have enjoyed a life of privilege **without being concerned for others**.

9 When widows came to you for help, you must have sent them away without giving them anything.

You must have oppressed orphans.

10 Because you did all those things, now you are having difficulties in many different areas of your life.

Things are happening all of a sudden that scare you.

11 And so you do not know what to do, as if it had become very dark and you could not see anything.

You cannot solve your problems; it is as if you were drowning in a flood of water.

12 But God lives high up in the heavens.

He looks at the earth from a place that is even higher than the stars.

13 So you should not say, ‘God does not know what people are doing.’

You should not say, ‘Dark clouds keep him from seeing us, so he cannot judge us.’

14 You should not say, ‘Since he walks on the dome that covers the sky,

where there are thick clouds around him, and he can not see what we do.’

15 You should not continue to conduct your life

in the way that evil people have done for many years.

16 God makes evil people die suddenly while they are still young.

They go away completely, as if a flood had swept them away.

17 Those evil people told God, ‘Leave us alone!’

They also said defiantly, ‘Shaddai can do nothing to harm us!’

18 Even so, God mercifully gave them many things to enjoy.

Nevertheless, I want to think completely differently from the way evil people think.

19 When good people see that God punishes evil people, they are glad.

People who have not done wrong say that those evil people are getting what they deserve.

20 Those good people say, ‘Now God has destroyed our enemies!

It is as if a fire has burned up everything they owned.’

21 So, Job, I urge you to ask God to forgive you. Restore your relationship with him.

If you do that, good things will happen to you.

22 Do pay attention to what God teaches you.
Meditate on what he says.
23 If you come humbly to Shaddai, he will restore you.
God will certainly do that if you stop doing the evil things that you have been doing.
24 Stop trusting in your wealth.
It should be as if you are throwing away your gold,
even the finest gold you have, onto the dirt and rocks.
25 If you do that, then Shaddai will be more precious to you than your gold and your silver ever were.
26 If you do that, then your relationship with Shaddai will make you very happy.
You will be able to approach God confidently.
27 When you pray to God, he will do what you ask him to do.
You will have many things to praise God for.
28 The things that you decide to do will be successful.
It will be as if a light were shining on the road in front of you so that you knew just where to walk.
29 People may cause great difficulties for you.
But when you pray and humbly ask God to help you,
he will save you.
30 God will even help people who have done wrong things if you pray for them.
God will answer your prayer because you will not have done wrong things."

23 1 Then Job replied to Eliphaz and the others. He said,

2 "I must still complain about many distressing things.
There is much more that I could have protested about.
3 I wish that I knew where I could find God.
If I knew that, I would go to the place where he lives.
4 I would present much evidence to God that I am innocent.
I would offer many arguments to prove that.

5 That way I would know what God would say
in reply to everything I would say to him.
6 He would not use his great power to defeat me.
He would listen to me fairly.
7 I am an honest man, so if I met with God personally, I would be able to discuss things with him reasonably.
If we could do that, he would declare that I am innocent.
After that, he would not punish me again as if I had sinned.
8 **But I do not know where to find God.**
If I went to the east, he would not be there.
If I went to the west, I would not see him there.
9 He makes natural things happen beautifully in the north,
but no one there sees him doing those things.
He must also go to the south,
but no one sees him there either.
10 Still, he knows how I have conducted my life.
When he has finished testing me,
he will see that I am as pure as gold whose impurities fire has burned out.
11 I have lived faithfully in the manner that God wants people to live.
I have not stopped living that way.
12 I have always obeyed the commandments that he has given.
I would rather go without food than disobey what God has told us to do.
13 But God seems to have made up his mind that I am a sinner,
and no one can make God change his mind.
Whatever he wants to do, he does.
14 So it seems that God will keep on punishing me until I die.
If my present troubles do not kill me, I am sure that God will cause many more troubles for me!
15 So the thought of coming into his presence greatly frightens me.
When I think about what he can do, that makes me very afraid of him.
16 I am afraid because I am no longer brave after what God has done to me.

Shaddai has made me very frightened.

17 I have lived to experience terrible things, and that is why I am so frightened.

I can only imagine that the future will be just as bad as the present.

24 1 Shaddai should set times when he judges evil people.

The people who obey God never seem to see him judge evil people.

2 Some evil people remove boundary markers so that they can steal other people's land.

Some evil people steal other people's sheep and put them in with their own sheep.

3 Some evil people take away donkeys that belong to children who have no fathers to protect them.

They make loans to widows, and then they take oxen that belong to them to guarantee that the widows will pay back the money.

But without the oxen, the widows cannot grow crops, so they cannot repay the loans, and the evil people keep the oxen.

4 Poor people do not want evil people to know where they are, so they do not walk on the main roads.

Poor people stay in hiding places in order to avoid evil people.

5 In fact, poor people have to search in the desert plain for food to feed their children,

as if they were wild donkeys.

6 The poor people pick up leftover grain in other people's fields.

They gather leftover grapes from vineyards that evil people own.

7 During the night they do not have thick garments to cover their bodies,

so they are not able to stay warm.

8 **Poor people have no homes, so** when rain showers come from the mountains, they get very wet.

They have to huddle under rock ledges to shelter themselves from the rain.

9 Some evil people even take babies away from their mothers while they are nursing!

They take the babies as a guarantee that their mothers will repay money that they have lent them.

10 Poor people do not have adequate clothing.

They also do not have adequate food,

even though they carry around bundles of grain because they work to bring in other people's harvests.

11 Evil people hire poor people to make oil from olives that grow on olive trees on their property.

The evil people also hire poor people to tread on grapes that grow on their vines to make juice for wine.

But they do not allow the poor people to drink any of the wine when they are thirsty.

12 In the cities, poor people groan because they are suffering.

People whom evil people have wounded cry out to God for help.

But God does not seem to care about what the evil people are doing to them.

13 These evil people are like others who do not obey God.

They do not try to understand what God wants or to do it.

14 Murderers go out in the dim light of morning so they can kill vulnerable people **without being caught**.

They are like thieves who steal things in the dark of night **in order to avoid being caught**.

15 Men who want to commit adultery watch for evening to come.

They say, 'I am going to make sure that no one recognizes me,' and they disguise themselves.

16 During the night, robbers find ways to get into other people's houses and steal things.

But during the day, they stay in their own homes.

They do not like being out where it is light.

17 These evil people all stay at home during the day because morning is as scary for them as the dark of night is for other people.

They stay up at night because they like being awake at night when things happen that terrify others.

18 However, those wicked people will not live long lives.
God will keep anything from growing on the land that they own.
No one will go and work in their vineyards.
19 Just as water from melting snow dries up when it is hot and there is no rain,
those evil people will go to the place where dead people go.
20 When they die, maggots will eat their corpses,
and no one will remember them.
Even their mothers will forget about them!
Those wicked people will be like trees that fall down and rot.

21 Those evil people mistreat women who do not have children to care for them.
Those evil people never help widows.
22 But God, by his power, gets rid of people who hurt others because they are stronger than those others.
When it is clear that God is going to punish those evil people, they know that they are going to die.
23 God allows them to think that they are secure, and so they do not worry,
but God is carefully watching how they live.
24 Those evil people may prosper for a little while,
but suddenly they will be gone.
God will show that they were not greater than others.
God will make them die like all other people.
Then they will be like stalks of grain that farmers have cut off.
25 What I have said is certainly true.
Now that I have explained it,
there is no one who can show that I am a liar
and prove me wrong."

25 **1** Then Bildad, Job's friend who was a Shuhite, responded to Job. He said,

2 "God is very powerful.
Everyone should honor him greatly.

God causes everything to be orderly high up in heaven.

3 No one can count all the stars in the sky.

When the sun rises, it shines on everyone.

4 Since God is so great, no person can be righteous compared with him.

No human being is innocent by his standards.

5 Consider this: God is so glorious that he does not even consider the full moon to be bright!

Even the white light of the stars does not seem pure to him.

6 So God would certainly not consider mortal humans to be pure!”

26 1 Then Job replied to Bildad and the others. He said,

2 “I am struggling, but you have not really helped me.

I am not able to overcome my difficulties, but you have not rescued me.

3 I need good advice, but you have not given me any.

You have said many things, but they have not been helpful.

4 I suppose you think that God helped you tell me important things.

But God was not really speaking through you.

5 **Let me tell you how great God really is.**

The spirits of dead people tremble with fear at God.

They are deep in the earth,

below the waters where the sea creatures live.

6 God knows all about those who are in the place where dead people go.

Nothing prevents God from seeing what is there.

7 God created the dome of the sky to make an orderly world.

God created the dry land where previously there was nowhere for people to live.

8 God uses clouds as containers for rainwater,

and he prevents that water from bursting the clouds.

9 God can make clouds so thick that even the bright moon cannot shine through them.

10 God has set the horizon in place as the outer edge of the oceans.
The horizon is at the place where the sky meets the earth.
11 Sometimes even the mountains that hold up the sky shake,
as if God were scolding them and they were afraid.
12 God used his power to restrain the oceans;
by his skill he destroyed Rahab, the huge sea monster.
13 God can make the sky clear by blowing away the clouds.
God brings order everywhere in creation by overcoming the forces of chaos.
14 But I have described only a little bit of what God does.
It is as if we can only hear someone whisper about him.
When we hear mighty thunder, we realize that God is far too great for us to understand."

27 1 Job kept speaking to his three friends. He said,

2 "I will promise you something as surely as God exists, even though he has treated me unfairly.
I will promise you something as surely as Shaddai exists, even though he has made my life so unpleasant.
3 I will insist on it for as long as I am alive.
Yes, for as long as I am still breathing, I will insist on it.
4 I promise that I will not say the wrong thing!
I promise that I will not say anything to deceive anyone!
5 And so I will never say that what you three have said about me is true.
Until the day that I die, I will insist that I have been living as God wants people to live.
6 I will insist that I am innocent. I will never say anything different.
That way, for as long as I live, I will not feel badly about saying something that was not true.
7 I want to be just the opposite of an evil person.
I want to disagree with the way anyone who is a bad person is living.
8 I want to be the opposite of an evil person because

when God decides it is time for that person to die,
he can only expect that God will then punish him for the wrong things that he has done.

9 When evil people are in trouble,
God does not rescue them when they pray for help.

10 Evil people are not happy about what Shaddai does.
They do not speak with God in prayer in good times as well as in bad times.

11 I need to teach you three something
about how God actually deals with the people of this world.

12 You three have certainly seen for yourselves how God treats people.
So you should not have been telling me things that have made so little sense.

13 I will tell you how God punishes evil people.
This is what Shaddai does to those who mistreat others:

14 Even if they have many children, those children will die in wars,
or they will die because they do not have enough food to eat.

15 Any children who are still alive after their evil parents die will perish from diseases.
Not even the wife of an evil man will mourn for him if he dies.

16 Sometimes evil people accumulate a large amount of money
and they acquire many valuable articles of clothing.

17 But even if evil people become rich, they will die,
and then righteous people will get their clothes.
Honest people will get their money and share it with one another.

18 The houses that they build are as weak as spider webs.
Their houses are flimsy, like the huts that watchmen live in while they guard people's fields.

19 God makes evil people lose their money.
It is as if they are rich when they go to bed one night,
but the next morning they wake up to find that their money is all gone.

20 When evil people realize that God is punishing them,

they become very afraid, as if those fears were water in which they were drowning.

God soon destroys the evil people, as if a whirlwind carried them away in the night.

21 It is as if a windstorm from the desert picks them up and carries them away from their homes.

No one ever sees them again.

22 It is as if a wind like that blows steadily against them

while they are running away, trying to escape from its force.

23 It is as if such a wind were clapping its hands at them to mock them.

It is as if such a wind blew them out of their houses and stayed there laughing at them.

28

1 There certainly are places where people dig to find silver.

There certainly are places where people refine gold that they have dug from the ground.

2 People get iron from ore that they dig out of the ground.

They get copper by heating and melting ore that contains it.

3 People use lamps so that they can see while they work far down under the ground.

They search for ore in many places where it is very dark.

4 People dig shafts deep into the ground in places that are far from where other people live,

As they work underground, the people who walk above them are not aware of them.

People have to climb down ropes in order to descend into the deep shafts they have dug.

5 Food grows on the surface of the ground.

But deep below the ground, miners make fires to break apart the rocks.

6 The stones that people dig from under the ground contain sapphires.

The dirt they dig up contains bits of gold.

7 Even birds that have very good eyesight can not see deep down into these mines.

Even birds such as falcons have not looked into them.

8 Strong beasts can go wherever they want, but they have never gone to those places.

Not even lions have gone there.

9 Miners dig through even very hard rock.

It is as though they are turning mountains upside down in order to get at the ore that is at the bases of them.

10 Miners cut tunnels through rocks

in order to find many precious things.

11 They dam up small streams to stop the water from flowing.

That allows them to find things that were hidden beneath the water of the streams.

12 **It takes great effort to find valuable ore.** It is even more difficult to obtain wisdom.

Yes, it is very difficult to obtain understanding.

13 Humans do not know how to obtain wisdom.

Wisdom is not available on earth, where people live.

14 It is as though the ocean depths and the water of the seas said,

'There is no wisdom here!'

15 People can not buy wisdom

by paying for it with gold or silver.

16 Wisdom is worth much more than fine gold that comes from the land of Ophir.

Wisdom is worth much more than very valuable stones.

17 Wisdom is worth much more than gold or beautiful quartz.

It is more expensive than an article made of pure gold.

18 Wisdom is worth more than coral or jasper.

The price of wisdom is higher than the price of rubies.

19 Wisdom is worth more than topaz from the land of Cush.

One can not express the value of wisdom even in terms of gold.

20 So, then, wisdom is very difficult to obtain;

understanding is indeed a very valuable thing to get.

21 Living creatures are not able to see it.

Not even the birds can see it while they are up in the sky.

22 Even after people die, they do not have a better experience of wisdom
in the different place to which they go.

23 God is the only one who knows how people can become wise.

24 God knows this because he can see everything on earth, even in its most remote places.

God can see everything that is below the sky.

25 He decided how strongly the winds should blow
and how much rain should be in the clouds.

26 God decided where rain should fall
and what path lightning should take from the clouds down to the ground.

27 At that time, he identified wisdom and recognized that it was very valuable.
He was delighted by its capabilities and made it a permanent part of his creation.

28 Then God told human beings, ‘Listen! You will become wise to the extent that you respect me.

If you want to understand what you should do, you must first decide that you will not do anything wicked.’”

29 **1** Job kept speaking to his three friends. He said,

2 “I wish that I could be as I was previously
during the time when God was taking care of me.

3 During that time, it was if God was shining a light on me
so that I could see where I was going even in the darkness.

4 At that time I was young and strong.

Because God was my friend, he protected where I lived.

5 Shaddai was still present with me during that time
when all my children were still alive and living near me.

6 My herds provided me with plenty of milk.

My olive trees provided me with plenty of oil.

7 I used to go to the place where the elders gathered at the city gate.

The people had reserved a seat for me there, and I would sit in it.

8 When young men saw me, they stepped aside respectfully.

When older men saw me, they stood up respectfully.

9 The leaders of the people used to stop talking when I arrived.

They made sure they did not say anything**, because they knew it would not be as good as what I was going to say**.

10 Even the most important leaders became quiet.

It was as if they were not even able to speak.

11 When people heard what I had to say,

they said good things about me.

They recognized that I had given wise counsel, and they approved of me

12 **They approved of me** because I had helped those who were poor and who were calling for help.

They also approved of me because I aided orphans who had no fathers to help them.

13 People who had been suffering and were about to die praised me **for rescuing them**.

I made widows very happy by helping them.

14 It was in my character to make sure that I and others did what was right.

Yes, it was in my character to make sure that people treated one another in a way that was just.

15 I helped people who could not see, as if I were seeing for them.

I helped people who could not walk, as if I were walking for them.

16 I protected poor people the way a father protects his children.

In the courts, I defended even people who were strangers to me.

17 I made wicked people stop oppressing others.

It was as if I were breaking the jaws of a wild animal

to make it drop its victim from its teeth.

18 At that time I thought, ‘I am certainly going to live a long life,

and then I will die at home with my family.

19 I am like a tree whose roots reach down into the water
and whose branches become wet with dew each night.
20 People continually honor me,
and I stay strong like a new bow.’
21 When I spoke, people waited to hear what I would say.
They remained silent until I advised them what they should do.
22 After I finished speaking, they did not say anything,
because what I had said was so satisfying.
23 They were as eager to hear me speak as farmers are for it to rain.
They listened to me with great appreciation, just as the ground seems to welcome the rain that falls in the spring.
24 I helped people who felt discouraged.
I remained cheerful even as I helped them deal with difficult situations.
25 As their leader, I decided what things would be good for them to do.
They respected me, just as soldiers respect the king who commands their army.
I was kind and sympathetic, like someone who comforts people who are mourning.

30 **1** But now, men who are younger than I am make fun of me.
They are men whose fathers I would not even have hired to help my dogs guard my sheep!
2 And I would not hire any of those young men to work for me either.
They are already feeble.
3 **No one hires them,** so they are poor and go hungry and have become thin.
They have to eat roots
that they find in places where no crops have grown for a long time.
4 They look among bushes to find leaves that they can eat.
They pull up broom trees and eat their roots.
5 **When they come near villages,**
people shout at them, as they would at a thief,
to make them leave their area.

6 They have to live in riverbeds,
in holes in the ground,
and in caves on the sides of cliffs.
7 During the day they huddle under thorn bushes.
There they howl like animals because they are so hungry.
8 They are people without good sense,
and they have never achieved anything significant.
People force them to leave their towns.
9 But these despicable young men sing songs to make fun of me!
If they think God is punishing someone for being a sinner, they call that person ‘another Job.’
10 They hate me and they stay away from me,
but if we happen to meet, they spit right in my face.
11 I am not able to defend myself against these young men, because God has taken away my strength.
He has humiliated me.
So they can do whatever they want to me.
12 Gangs of these young men threaten me.
They shove me aside when they pass by.
They think of new ways to hurt me.
13 I am not able to escape from them,
even as they keep doing worse things to me.
No one else would do the things they do to me.
14 It is as if I were a city and they were an army that had broken through its wall
and sent in waves of troops to destroy the city.
15 I am afraid of many things.
I have no dignity left,
and I do not expect that I will ever get out of this situation.
16 I feel as if I am about to die,
but in the meantime, I am suffering greatly.
17 My body aches during the night.

I feel pain continually.

18 I have such a serious disease that my skin no longer looks the same.

It seems as if I will always be sick.

19 God has made me suffer so much that I have been sitting here on the ground.

I am even beginning to look like the dust and ashes in which I have been sitting.

20 Even though I pray to you, God, you do not respond.

I try to get your attention, but you do not do anything to help me.

21 You used to be kind to me, but you are not kind to me anymore.

You are using your mighty power to make me suffer.

22 It is as if you have sent a great wind to pick me up and carry me away.

It is as if you are making a violent storm blow me around.

23 Certainly I know that you are going to make me die.

That is what happens to everyone who ever lives.

24 However, when someone falls down, he certainly reaches out with his hand for help.

When someone is in trouble, he certainly calls for help.

25 **So it is appropriate for me to ask for your help now, God.**

After all, I wept for people myself when they were experiencing troubles.

I felt sorry for poor people.

26 I am asking for help because although I expected good things to happen to me, evil things happened instead.

It was as if I was waiting for dawn but another night started instead of a new day.

27 I am very distressed all the time.

I suffer during every day.

28 I look as if I have to work outside all day to make a living.

I humble myself by pleading openly for people to help me.

29 **No one wants to come near me.**

It is as if I am a jackal or ostrich living out in the wilderness.

30 My skin has become dark, and it is peeling off.

I have a fever that causes my body to feel as if it were burning up.

31 Previously, if you came to my house, you would hear musical instruments playing happy songs.

If you came now, you would only hear people crying and singing sad songs.

31 **1** I have made a solemn promise to myself that I will not look at a woman in a lustful way.

So I would not look at a woman who was not my wife and want to have sexual relations with her.

2 **If I did not do what I promised,**

God who is in heaven would certainly punish me.

Shaddai in heaven would make sure that I got what I deserved.

3 **I would not have done wrong in that way, because I know that** unrighteous people experience calamities.

People who do what is wrong experience disasters **when God punishes them**.

4 I know that God sees everything that I do.

He is aware of each individual action that I take.

5 I solemnly declare that I have not lied to others

and that I have not tried to deceive others.

6 I only ask God to judge me fairly.

If he does that, he will find that I am innocent.

7 I solemnly declare that I have continually acted properly.

I have not seen wrong things to do and then done them.

I am not guilty of committing sin.

8 If I have been lustful or deceptive, I hope that when I plant seeds, someone else will harvest the crops and eat them.

Or may someone uproot the crops that are growing in my fields!

9 I solemnly declare that I have not been attracted to another man's wife.

I have not made secret arrangements with a woman to have sexual relations with her while her husband was away.

10 If I have done that, I hope that my own wife will be attracted to another man

and that she will have sexual relations with him.

11 If I had sexual relations with another man's wife, that would be a terrible sin.

If I were caught and her husband brought me to court, the judges would certainly decide to punish me.

12 **I would have to pay a fine that would cost me everything I owned.**

It would be as if a fire had burned everything I had right to the ground.

It would be as if someone pulled out all the crops that were growing in my fields.

13 I solemnly declare that when my male or female servants complained to me about something,

I took their complaint seriously and made sure that I treated them fairly.

14 I knew that if I did not treat my servants fairly,

I could not expect God to be merciful to me when he judged me.

If God came to help my servants,

15 I could offer no excuse for the way I had treated them. **I am no different from my servants, so I have no right to mistreat them.**

The same God created each one of us.

16-18 I solemnly declare that from the time that I was young,

I have taken care of orphans and I have protected widows.

I have not failed to provide poor people with the things that they needed.

I have not caused widows to lose hope.

I have not eaten all of my food by myself and not shared it with orphans.

19 I solemnly declare that I provided clothes for poor people when I saw that they were suffering from lack of clothing.

I have provided warm outer garments for needy people.

20 I gave them warm clothes that my servants had woven from the wool of my sheep.

The poor people thanked me for helping them.

21 I solemnly declare that I never threatened an orphan who brought a case against me in the public square.

Even if I knew that the other elders would favor me,

I made sure that the orphan received fair treatment.

22 If I have neglected poor people or oppressed orphans,
may the arm that I did not use to help them but used instead to threaten them
fall right out of its socket!
23 I have not done wrong things such as I have been describing,
because I respect God and I know that he punishes sin.
I would not sin against such a majestic God!
24 I solemnly declare that I have not depended on wealth
as a source of security and power.
25 I solemnly declare that I did not think that I was better than other people
because I had many possessions and because I had become very rich.
26 I solemnly declare that I never looked at the sun when it was shining
or at the beautiful moon
27 and made a gesture to worship them.
I never wanted to do that.
28 If I had worshiped the sun or the moon and people found out that I had,
the judges would certainly decide to punish me for that too,
because I would have been worshiping a false god instead of the true God.
29-30 I solemnly declare that I have not been glad when my enemies have suffered misfortunes.
I have not thought that I was better than they were when they experienced disasters.
I have not sinned by praying that God would curse people who hated me
and cause them to die.
31-32 I solemnly declare that I have invited travelers to stay in my house.
Visitors have not had to sleep in the streets.
My servants talk about how I give food to anyone who needs it.
33 I know that people generally try to hide their sins.
But I solemnly declare that I have not done that.
34 I did not let fear of what people would say about me or think of me
keep me from admitting that I had done wrong and making amends.
35 I wish that I had someone who would judge my case against God!

I hereby declare that all that I have just said is true.

Now I wish that Shaddai would state his case.

I would like to see his written statement of charges against me.

36 If Shaddai wrote out his charges against me,

I would not be ashamed, because I know that I am innocent.

I would display the charges publicly**, because they would actually list what I had not done**.

37 I would explain to God in detail

how I was innocent of each charge.

I would approach him as a ruler would: without being afraid.

38 I solemnly declare that I have not defrauded the people who farm my land.

They have no reason to cry out for justice against me.

39 I solemnly declare that I have taken only a fair share of the crops that people have grown on my land.

I have made sure that the people who grew crops on my land kept enough of them to feed their families.

40 If I have cheated the people who farm my land,

then I wish that thorns would grow in my fields instead of wheat.

I wish that bad weeds would grow there instead of barley!"

After this, Job said nothing further to defend himself to his three friends.

32 **1** Then Job's three friends stopped replying to him, because Job was confident that he was innocent. **2** Then a man named Elihu**, who had been listening as Job spoke with his friends,** became very angry with Job. Elihu was the son of Barakel. He was a Buzite and he belonged to the clan of Ram. He became angry because Job continued to claim that he was innocent and that God had been wrong to punish him. **3** Elihu also became angry with Job's three friends. He became angry because they had insisted that Job must have done many things that were wrong, but they had not been able to prove any of their accusations. **4** Now Elihu was much younger than Job's three friends. That was why he had let them speak to Job first. **5** But when Elihu realized that the three men had nothing more to say to Job, he became very angry.

6 This is what Elihu said. (He was the son of Barakel. He was a Buzite.)

"I am young, and you all are much older than I am.
So I was hesitant. I was afraid to tell you what I was thinking.
7 I said to myself, 'I should let the people who are older speak.
Older people should be able to explain how to understand things wisely.'
8 However, even as I was saying that, I felt the Spirit of God stirring within me.
Yes, I felt Shaddai inspiring me so that I could understand.
9 Humble people can also be wise.
Younger people can also recognize the right thing to do.
10 So now I want to ask you, 'Please listen to me.
Let me too say what I have been thinking.'
11 Now I let the three of you speak first.
I waited while you thought carefully about what you should say,
and I listened to your arguments.
12 I paid careful attention to what you were saying.
But in the end, none of you was able to prove that what Job said was wrong.
None of you could respond to his arguments.
13 So do not tell yourselves, 'We have discovered what is wise!'
It is God who must show Job that he is wrong.
Someone relying on human thinking will not be able to do that.
14 You were angry with Job, and so you have not answered him well.
But Job has said nothing to make me angry, so I will not answer him the way you have.
15 The three of you are just sitting there in a daze, not saying anything more,
because you cannot think of what to say to Job.
16 And since you are not speaking, since you have stopped answering Job,
I do not feel that I need to wait any longer before speaking to Job myself.
17 So now I too will respond to Job.
I will share my view of his situation.
18 I must speak, because I have plenty to say,

and something inside me is forcing me to say it.

19 I feel as if I am a container of wine that is stretching more and more
and that will soon burst because of the fermentation.

20 I must speak, and then I will be able to rest from the effort of restraining myself from speaking.
So I will now say something in reply to all of you.

21 I will not favor either Job or you his friends.
I will not try to flatter anyone.

22 Indeed, I have not gotten into the habit of flattering people,
because I believe that if I did that, God would quickly destroy me.

33 1 So now, Job, I ask you to listen carefully
to everything that I am going to say.

2 I am ready to speak to you and tell you what I think.

3 What I say will express my sincere feelings of concern for you.
I will only tell you what is genuinely true.

4 You can trust me as someone whom God's Spirit created.
You can trust me as someone whom Shaddai made alive.

5 **Once I have spoken,** respond to me if you can.
Think carefully about how you will reply to me.

6 Now you wanted God to answer you, and I will do that for him.
But I am human, just like you,

7 so you do not need to be afraid of me.
I will not speak to you harshly.

8 I listened carefully to you as you spoke,
and this is what I heard you say:

9 'I am righteous. I have not committed any sins.
I am innocent. I have not done things that are wrong.

10 Nevertheless, God looks for excuses to punish me.
He treats me as if I were his enemy.

11 He judges me by very strict standards.

He closely observes everything that I do.’

12 However, what you have said is incorrect.

I will explain why.

You do not realize what God is actually doing, since it is beyond human understanding.

13 You should not be protesting that God does not respond to what anyone says.

14 God actually does speak to people in various ways.

People just do not realize how he is doing that.

15 Sometimes God speaks to people at night in dreams and visions

when they are sound asleep in bed.

16 God reveals things to people at those times.

He shows them that they need to change the way that they have been living.

17 God speaks in that way to get people to stop doing evil deeds.

God wants to prevent people from sinning because they have become proud.

18 In this way, God prevents people from dying.

Otherwise, someone might kill them violently.

19 God also corrects people by making them so ill that they have to lie in bed.

They feel constant agony in their bodies.

20 They feel so sick that they do not want to eat anything,

not even their favorite foods.

21 They lose so much weight that there appears to be no flesh between their skin and their bones.

22 They become so sick that they are about to die.

The angels who cause people to die start coming to get them.

23 However, sometimes a special kind of angel may come to a person

and tell him on behalf of God how he can change the way that he has been living so that he will not die.

24 **If the person changes the way that he has been living,**

then God will forgive him.

God will tell the angels who cause people to die,

‘Do not cause this person to die!

I can see that I should allow him to live, because now he will do what is right.'

25 When that happens, the person will become healthy again and his skin will appear as fresh as the skin of a child.

He will be as strong again as he was when he was young.

26 Then God will once again treat him as a righteous person.

He will pray to God, and God will answer his prayer.

He will come into God's presence joyfully.

27 He will sing a song of thanksgiving and tell the people who are listening,

'I sinned; yes, I did things that were not right,

but God did not punish me in the way that I deserved.

28 He has saved me from going to the place where dead people are.

And so I will continue to enjoy being alive!'

29 Indeed, God does this for many people.

30 He keeps them from going to the place where dead people are.

That way they can continue to enjoy being alive.

31 So Job, please listen to me.

Do not say anything right now; just allow me to speak.

32 **After I have spoken, then** if you have something more that you want to say to me,

say it, because I would like to show that you are innocent.

33 However, if you have nothing more that you want to say, then just listen to me.

I will explain to you how you can understand your situation in a wise way."

34

1 Then Elihu continued to speak, and he said,

2 "I want everyone who is wise to hear what I am about to say.

I want everyone who knows a lot to listen to me.

3 I want you to listen carefully to me because when people hear others speak,

they need to decide whether what the others are saying is right or wrong.

They do this just as people taste food to decide whether it is good or bad.

4 I would like all of us to decide together who is right, Job or his friends.

I would like us to find out together what is a good way to understand his situation.

5 We need to consider this carefully together because Job has said, ‘I am innocent,
but God has not judged me fairly.’

6 Job has said he would not lie about whether he has done what is right.
He has spoken as if God had shot him with an arrow and wounded him so badly that he will die,
even though he is innocent.

7 I have not heard anyone else speak the way Job does.
People drink water to satisfy their thirst, and mocking God seems to satisfy Job.

8 His friends are people who do what is wrong.
He spends time with wicked people.

9 We know that this is true about him because he has said, ‘It is useless for people to want to please God.’

10 So, all of you who understand things well, listen to me!
God would never consider doing anything that was wicked!
No, Shaddai would never consider doing anything that was wrong!

11 We can be confident that God treats people fairly because we can see that he rewards or punishes people properly for what they have done.
God gives people what they deserve for the manner in which they have lived.

12 No, God never does anything wicked.
Shaddai always treats people fairly.

13 God did not need anyone to give him the authority to rule the people who live on the earth.
He did not need anyone to put him in control of all the people in the world.

14 If God ever thought only about himself and not also about the world he created,
if God ever stopped keeping people and animals alive,

15 then every living thing would die immediately,
and the bodies of people would soon become soil again.

16 So, Job, if you truly want to understand,

then listen carefully to what I am about to say.

17 God could certainly not hate what is right and still rule the world.

So you really cannot say that God, who is righteous and powerful, has done something wrong.

18 God tells some kings that they are worthless,

and he says to some officials that they are wicked.

19 God does not treat rulers better than he treats other people.

God does not treat rich people more respectfully than he treats poor people.

After all, God created all people.

20 If people use their power to oppress others,

God punishes them by killing them.

Those people are not expecting to have troubles and die, and humans do not kill them,

but God kills them very quickly.

21 God punishes oppressive people because he sees everything that people do.

God is aware of each individual action that a person does.

22 Wicked people can not escape from God

by hiding in places where it is very dark.

23 Now God does not need to examine a person further

before passing judgment on that person.

24 God does not need to investigate what people have done.

He knows whether important people have done wrong, and he destroys them if they have.

He then appoints others to take their places.

25 Because he already knows what they have done,

he removes them quickly and gets rid of them.

26 God kills them because of the wicked things that they have done.

Many people see him do it.

27 God kills them because they stopped doing what he wanted them to do

and did not pay attention to his commands.

28 They mistreated poor people.

Those poor people prayed to God for help,
and God answered their prayers.
29 Yet even if God decides not to punish wicked people right away,
no one can criticize him.
If God does not reveal what he is doing,
no one can understand it.
God controls every nation and every person.
30 God makes sure that those who rule honor him.
He makes sure that rulers do not oppress the people whom they rule.
31 Suppose someone says to God,
'I recognize that I am suffering because I have sinned.
I do not want to sin any longer.
32 Please show me what sins I have committed.
I will stop doing anything that is evil.'
33 If a person said that to God,
do you think that God would continue to punish him?
Now you have been saying that God does not treat people fairly,
so it is important for you to decide what you think God would do.
I will not suggest the answer myself.
We would like to hear you say what you think about this.
34 **But unfortunately, I believe that** when people who have good sense
and people who are wise hear my question and your answer,
they will say to me,
35 'Job is speaking ignorantly.
What he says does not make sense.'
36 It would be good if God put Job on trial
and investigated every last detail of his case.
God should do that because Job has been speaking just as wicked people speak.
37 God should put Job on trial because in addition to sinning,
he is saying that God does not treat people fairly.

Knowing that we were watching, he clapped his hands to insult God.
He has made long speeches to say that God has punished him unjustly."

35 **1** Then Elihu continued to speak, and he said,

2 "Job, it is not right for you to say that you have been doing what is right
but God has been doing what is wrong.
3 You are basically saying that when you ask,
'What good things have I received because I have not sinned?
How am I better off than I would be if I had sinned?'
4 I will answer those questions for you,
and I will also respond to what your three friends have said.
5 Job, look up at the sky.
See how high the clouds are above you!
God is far higher than that!
6 So if you sin, that does not harm God at all.
Even if you do many wrong things, that does not hurt him.
7 On the other hand, if you do what is right, that does not make God better off.
No, you are not giving God something that he does not already have.
8 The only ones who suffer if you are wicked are other people.
The only ones you might help by being good are other humans.
9 People call for others to help them because of the many things that wicked people do that make them suffer.
They call for help because of the things that powerful people do to oppress them.
10 But people do not ask God, their Creator, to help them.
People do not expect God to enable them to sing joyful songs because he has rescued them.
11 People do not realize that God wants to teach them how to live wisely.
God does that for people, not for wild animals or for the birds in the sky.
12 Even when people do pray to God for help,

God does not answer them,
because they arrogantly continue to do what is wrong.
13 God, the Almighty One, does not respond at all
when people pray but do not really mean what they are saying.
14 You are telling God that you have made your case against him
but that you are still waiting for him to answer your accusations.
You are saying that God has not been helping you.
Since you say those things, you should certainly not expect God to respond to you!
15 You also say that God does not pay much attention when people commit sins,
and so he does not become angry and punish them.
16 My friends, you see that Job has said things that are completely useless.
He says many things without knowing what he is talking about."

36 1 Then Elihu said some more things to Job:

2 "Job, be patient with me a little longer as I explain things to you.
Be patient, because I have more to say in order to show that God does not do anything wrong.
3 I will tell you what I have learned from many sources.
I will show that God, who made me, always does what is right.
4 You can indeed listen patiently because I will not say anything to you that is false.
I am here with you as someone who understands things well.
5 Truly, God is very powerful, but he values every person.
He understands everything completely.
6 He does not allow wicked people to remain alive,
but he helps people whom others have been oppressing.
7 He always protects people who are righteous.
He makes them prosper as if they were kings,
and he causes others to honor them continually.

8 Sometimes people suffer great troubles because they have done wrong things.

9 When they do, God shows them what they have done wrong.

He shows them that they committed these sins because they were proud.

10 He enables them to understand what he is teaching them.

He commands them to stop sinning.

11 If they obey him and once again live as he wishes,

they will prosper and be happy for as long as they live.

12 But if they do not obey him,

they will die violently

because they did not seek to understand how God wanted them to live.

13 People who do not respect God continue to be angry with God.

They do not ask God to help them

even when they are suffering because of their sins.

14 They can only make a living in a dishonorable way,

and they die while they are still young.

15 God actually uses suffering to keep people from perishing because of their sins.

By making them suffer, he causes them to listen to what he is telling them.

16 Job, I believe that God wants to bring you out of your troubles

and allow you to live without distress.

He wants you to be happy and prosperous.

17 However, you are still saying bad things about God the way a wicked person would.

That is why God is punishing you so severely.

18 You are angry with God, but do not let that lead you to say disrespectful things about God.

If you did that, God would not accept even a very large bribe to pardon you.

19 God would not want your money and so pardon you.

He would not take gold or a great deal of money as a bribe.

20 You should not wish that you could die so that your suffering would be over.

Once people die, they are gone.

21 Be careful not to commit sin.

It seems that you would rather defy God than learn what he wants to teach you through suffering.

22 Truly, God is so powerful that he can do great things.
He is better than any other teacher.

23 No one has ever told him what he should do.
No one has ever had to tell him that what he was doing was wrong.

24 People have often sung songs to praise him.
You too should remember what he has done and praise him for it.

25 Everyone has seen what God has done,
but even so, people only understand it a little.

26 How great God is! We are not able to understand how great he is,
and we are not able to determine how old he is.

27 Indeed, God draws water up from the earth and puts it in clouds
and causes it to become rain.

28 This rain pours down from the clouds
and abundant showers fall on the earth, where people live.

29 No one can really understand how the clouds spread across the sky
or how it thunders in the sky where God lives.

30 See how God causes lightning to flash all around him!
The lightning is so bright that it lights up even the deep ocean.

31 Because his storms are so great, God uses them to punish wicked people.
But he also uses the rain from these storms to provide abundant food for righteous people.

32 It is as if God picks up lightning in his hands
and sends it to strike where he wants it to.

33 God makes thunder to announce that there will be a storm.
We also know that a storm is coming when we hear cattle making extra noise.

37 **1** My heart really pounds when I think about that!
I feel as if it is jumping around inside me.

2 Listen, all of you, to the thunder!
It is as if God is roaring!
3 God makes such loud thunder that people can hear it throughout the land.
God makes such bright lighting that people can see it from far away.
4 After lightning flashes, we hear thunder,
which sounds like God speaking very loudly.
Then, after the thunder, God makes more lightning.
5 When we hear thunder, it is as if God is shouting in an amazing way.
God does things that are too wonderful for us to understand.
6 For example, God can cause snow to cover the ground,
and when he tells a rain shower to rain even harder, it becomes a downpour.
7 When God makes it rain so hard, everyone has to stop working outside.
This shows all people, whom he has made, what great things he is able to do.
8 When it rains, the animals go into their hiding places
and they stay there until the rain stops.
9 Storms come from the place where they start,
and cold winds come from the north.
10 In the winter, cold winds turn water into ice.
The water in lakes freezes solid.
11 God truly fills the clouds with water droplets.
He makes lightning flash from many clouds.
12 He causes the clouds to move around over the places where people live
so that they can accomplish everything that he wants them to do.
13 God may send storms to punish people.
God may send storms to water the land that he made.
God may send storms to help people by providing rain to make their crops grow.
God makes all of these things happen.
14 Job, listen to what I am saying.
Just think about the wonderful things that God does.

15 Are you able to explain how God arranges the clouds in the sky and makes
lightning flash down from them?
16 Are you able to explain how God is able to make clouds float in the sky?
Can you understand all of the wonderful things that God does?
God understands everything completely!
17 Are you able to explain how God can bring in stifling air from the desert
and make it so hot that you cannot stay cool if you wear clothes?
18 Are you able to explain how God made the sky
so that it would stay firmly in place above the earth?
19 I doubt that you could tell us what to say to God.
People do not know enough to be able to defend themselves if they spoke
with God.
20 I would not dare tell God that I needed to speak with him!
If I did that, then he might destroy me!
21 You know that people can not look directly at the sun
when it shines brightly in the sky after the wind has blown the clouds away.
22 When God appears, he has glittering light all around him.
His glory is so bright that it makes us afraid.
So if we cannot even look at the sun, how could we look at God?
23 Shaddai has very great power,
and we do not know how to get near to him.
He always acts righteously,
and he never mistreats anyone.
24 That is why everyone should have great respect for him.
Any people who think that they are wise do not impress him."

38 1 Then Yahweh spoke to Job from inside the storm that had been approaching. He said
to him,

2 "You have been speaking ignorantly, and as a result,
you have been making it harder for people to understand my actions.

3 I am going to ask you some questions,

so get ready to answer them directly.

4 Where were you when I began to create the earth?

Since you claim to know so much, tell me how I did that.

5 Who decided how large the earth would be?

Who made sure that it was the right size?

If you know as much as you claim, you ought to be able to tell me that.

6-7 What keeps the earth from collapsing?

Who made sure that everything on the earth would be in the right position?

The earth was so beautiful when I made it that it was as if the first stars all sang a song to celebrate it.

All of the angels gave a great cheer when they saw the earth.

8 When I made the land, the sea could have flowed over it.

9 Who prevented the sea from flooding the earth? Now the clouds in the sky float over the sea as if they were its clothing.

Night and day happen at sea just as they do on land.

10 I decided how much of the area under the sky the sea would cover.

I made barriers at the shore of the sea to keep it off the land.

11 I proclaimed that the sea could only come up so far on the shore and not come any farther.

I said that its great waves could only flow up to a certain place on the land.

12 Job, have you ever commanded a day to begin?

Have you told the sun where it needed to rise on a certain day?

13 When day comes, wicked people all around the world

stop doing the bad things they do at night when no one can see them.

14 In the light of day, people can see the hills and valleys on earth clearly.

The earth seems to take shape the way clay takes shape when people press a seal onto it

or the way folds form in clothing.

15 When daylight comes, wicked people do not have the darkness that they like.

They are no longer able to hurt other people.

16 Job, have you traveled to the springs at the bottom of the sea?
Have you gone and seen what is at the very bottom of the oceans?
17 Has someone shown you how to get to the place where dead people are?
Do you know where the entrance to that dark place is?
18 Do you know how big the earth is?
Tell me, if you know all these things!
19 Do you know how to get to the place where light comes from?
Do you know where darkness comes from?
20 Would you know how to get to those places
so that you could bring light and darkness to them?
21 If you had been alive when I created the world, then you would know the answers to these questions.
But you are not that old, so you certainly do not know the answers.
22 Have you gone into the place where I keep snow,
or have you visited the place where I keep hail?
23 I keep snow and hail so that I can use them to defeat one of the armies
when people are fighting wars.
24 Would you know how to get to the place where the sun should rise each morning?
Would you know where the east wind should begin to blow over the earth?
25 Could you make rain fall in a certain place?
Could you make a rainstorm go in a certain direction
26 so that it would rain out in the desert,
in a place where no one lives?
27 Would you be able to send rain there to water those barren areas where nothing has grown,
so that grass would begin to grow again?
28 Do you even know where rain comes from?
Do you know how dew forms on the ground overnight?
29 Do you know how water becomes ice in the winter?

Do you know why dew turns into the frost that covers the ground in the winter?

30 Do you know why the surface of lakes freezes in the winter?

You cannot see the water below the surface; it is as if there is a layer of stone on top of it.

31 Can you make stars cluster together, as they do in the cluster you call the Pleiades?

Can you make stars move apart so that they no longer make constellations

32 such as the one you call Orion? Can you make the constellations of stars appear in the sky at the right time of the year?

Can you make the Big Dipper with its handle appear in the right place in the sky?

33 Do you know how the sun, moon, and stars should move through the sky?

Do you know how they should provide heat and light on the earth?

34 Could you shout an order up to a cloud

to make it pour rain down on you?

35 Can you tell flashes of lightning to strike wherever you want?

Would the lightning do what you commanded?

36 Can you determine where it should be cloudy and where it should be sunny?

37 Are you able to count how many clouds there are?

Can you make it rain

38 after it has not rained for such a long time

that the ground is hard and dry?

39-40 Suppose a lioness and her cubs were crouching in their den or hiding in some bushes, waiting for some animal to pass by that they could kill.

Could you make an animal go by that the lioness could kill

so that she and her cubs could eat the meat and not be hungry anymore?

41 Suppose some baby ravens in a nest were chirping loudly because they were hungry.

Suppose they had not eaten in so long that they had become weak.

Could you provide a dead animal whose meat the raven could bring home to its baby birds?

39

1 Job, can you tell when female mountain goats are about to give birth?
Have you watched the wild deer while their calves were being born?

2 Do you know for how long these female animals will be pregnant? Do you know when they will have their babies?

3 They crouch down to give birth,
and their babies come out.

4 The young animals grow up in the open fields.
Once they are strong enough to leave their mothers,
they do not return to them again.

5 Do you know why some donkeys wander around wild?
Do you know why they are not still working for people?

6 I have given them a home in the desert plain.
They are able to live in places where much grass does not grow.

7 These wild donkeys do not like the noise in the cities.
In the desert, they do not have to listen to the shouts of those who used to force them to work.

8 They wander over the hills to find food.
They look for any plant that they can eat.

9 There are also oxen that are wild.
You could not get one of those to work for you!
It would not stay penned up at night by the place where you put food for your animals!

10 You could not make a wild ox pull a plow
so that it would dig furrows in your fields.

11 Even though a wild ox is very strong,
you could not depend on it to do difficult farm work.

12 A wild ox would not help you
to grow more crops than you could grow by yourself.

13 Now think about ostriches.
They run very fast, flapping their wings as they go.

But they do not take good care of their offspring.

14 Female ostriches are bad mothers, because lay their eggs and leave them on the ground.

The eggs do stay warm in the sand.

15 But this is still not a good thing to do.

Some wild animal could step on the eggs and crush them.

16 Ostriches do not care well for their chicks.

They act as if the chicks do not belong to them.

They do not seem to be concerned that their chicks might die

and they would have laid their eggs for nothing.

17 Ostriches act this way because I did not give them good instincts.

I did not enable them to understand how they should care for their eggs and chicks.

18 However, ostriches are still awesome birds.

When they run, they can easily run faster than horses!

19 But I made horses to be very strong.

I put beautiful flowing manes on their necks.

20 I enabled them to leap through the air as if they were locusts.

They snort so loudly that they cause people to be afraid.

21 As horses prepare to rush into battle,

they paw the ground, showing off their great strength.

22 Horses seem to disregard danger as they go bravely into battle.

They do not run away when enemy soldiers attack them.

23 As horses run into battle,

the quivers containing their riders' arrows rattle against their sides.

The spears and javelins that they are carrying flash in the sunlight.

24 Horses rush into battle as soon as an officer blows a horn to signal that the army should advance.

The horses run very quickly, and they speedily reach the enemy lines.

25 When they hear someone blow the battle horn, horses neigh excitedly.

They can smell a battle even from a distance.

They hear commanders shouting orders to their soldiers **and they know the battle will begin soon**.

26 Now think about birds that hunt small animals and other birds.

Do you know how hawks are able to stay in the air as if they were floating?

Do you know how they sense when it is time to fly to a warmer place for the winter?

27 I gave eagles the ability to fly high up into the cliffs and build their nests there.

28 Eagles live on cliffs.

They are safe among the high, pointed rocks there because no animals can get to them.

29 From that great height, eagles look for animals that they can kill and eat.

They can see animals that are far away.

30 Eagles kill small animals and bring them back to their nests to feed their chicks.

Eagles also go and eat dead bodies that they see lying on the ground."

40 **1** Yahweh continued to speak to Job. He said,

2 "Do you still think I am wrong and want to keep arguing with me?

If you want to keep criticizing me, then answer the questions I have asked you!"

3 But Job replied to Yahweh,

4 "Now I realize how insignificant I am. I am not able to answer your questions.

I will not say anything in response to them.

5 I have already said more than I should have said.

So now I will say nothing more."

6 Then Yahweh again spoke to Job from inside the storm. He said,

7 "I am going to ask you some more questions, so get ready to answer them directly.

8 Do you still want to govern the universe instead of me?

Do you still want to insist that I am doing things wrong and that you would do them right?

9 Do you have the same amount of power as I do?

Does your voice sound as loud as thunder, as mine does?

10 If you want to govern the universe, you must show that you are dignified and noble.

You must show that your character is glorious and beautiful.

11 You must express holy wrath against the people who deserve it.

You must recognize which people are being sinfully arrogant and take them out of important positions.

12 Yes, you must not allow arrogant people to remain in important positions.

Destroy wicked people quickly!

13 Punish all of them by killing them.

Then send them to the place where dead people go.

14 If you did that, I would congratulate you

and admit that you could save yourself by your own ability.

15 **But to show you how insignificant you really are,**

I want you to think about a great animal that I created, Behemoth.

I made you, and I also made it.

Even though this great beast has the size and strength to hunt and kill other animals, it eats plants as oxen do.

16 Think about how strong the legs of Behemoth are!

And the muscles in its belly are very powerful.

17 Behemoth can make its tail as stiff as the branch of a cedar tree and hold it up in the air.

It has very strong legs.

18 Its thigh bones are so strong that they are like tubes made of bronze.

Its legs are so strong that they are like bars made of iron.

19 Behemoth is one of the strongest animals that I made.

I gave it sharp tusks so that it could cut down plants and eat them.

20 It needs those tusks because it comes out of the river where it lives in order to eat the plants that grow nearby.

But other animals do not have to be afraid of it, so those animals do not run away or hide.

21 Behemoth lies under the trees that grow near the river where it lives.

It sometimes shelters in the tall reeds that grow in the swamps of the river.

22 Behemoth stays in the shade of trees that grow near the river.

It stays in the midst of the trees that grow near the water.

23 Even when the river in which it lives become strong and turbulent, this does not disturb Behemoth.

It does not mind even if the level of the water in the river rises very high.

24 No one could capture Behemoth even if he could get close enough to stand right in front of it.

No one can make Behemoth a tame animal.

41

1 **And now I want you to think about another great animal that I created, Leviathan.**

You cannot catch Leviathan with a fishhook,

and you cannot tie rope around its jaws to hold them closed!

2 You cannot hook its jaws to catch it

and then put cords through its nose to control it.

3 Leviathan would certainly not plead with you to act mercifully toward it!

It would not use sweet talk to try to get you not to harm it!

4 Leviathan would certainly not make an agreement to work for you

as your slave for as long as it lived!

5 You could not turn it into a pet, as people do with birds!

You could not put a leash around its neck so that the young women in your household could take it for walks!

6 People who work together to catch fish could never catch Leviathan and then decide what share of it belonged to each of them.

They would never get the chance to cut Leviathan into pieces and then sell its meat!

7 People cannot throw harpoons hard enough at Leviathan to pierce its hide!

People cannot throw fishing spears into its head!

8 If you try to fight with Leviathan, it will give you a battle that you will never forget!

You will never try to do that again!

9 It is useless even to hope to subdue Leviathan.

Just the sight of it is enough to make a person become so afraid that he falls down.

10 No one is so foolhardy that he would wake up Leviathan if it were sleeping. **It would angrily attack him.**

Since that is true, it is even more foolhardy to challenge me**, as you have done**.

11 **Even if people are righteous,** they have not done anything for me

that obligates me to make only good things happen to them.

Everything in the created world belongs to me**, so no one can give me anything that I have to repay.**

12 And now I want to speak to you further.

You said that you wanted to wake up Leviathan! As I said, that would be very foolish.

It has agile legs and great strength and a graceful shape.

13 It has a tough hide that no one can strip off.

It has powerful jaws.

14 Those jaws have terrible teeth in them!

No one can pry them open when they are closed**, and no one can release them when they bite onto something.**

15 It has rows of scales on its back

with no gaps between them.

16 Those scales are so close together

that it seems as if not even air can get between them.

17 Those scales join very closely to each other

and they do not pull apart.

18 When Leviathan makes a loud sound, fire comes out of its mouth as well as noise.

It has bright, scary eyes that seem to glow with fire.

19 When it breathes,

it shoots out flames and fiery sparks.

20 Smoke pours out of its nostrils

the way steam pours out of a pot of boiling water over a hot fire.

21 Flames shoot out from its mouth,

so when it breathes on wood, the wood catches fire.

22 Its neck is very strong.

Wherever it goes, it makes people very afraid.

23 Leviathan does not have a soft belly as other animals do.

Scales wrap around its belly and hold it tightly to its body.

24 It does not feel any compassion,

any more than a stone would feel compassion

or the lower millstone on which people grind grain would feel compassion.

25 When Leviathan rises up out of the ocean,

the bravest people become terrified.

When sailors see it churning up the water,

they sail away as fast as they can.

26 People cannot injure it with swords.

They cannot injure it with spears, arrows, or other weapons that have sharp points, either.

27 An iron weapon could not hurt it any more than straw could.

A bronze weapon could not hurt it any more than a weapon made of rotten wood.

28 Shooting arrows at it does not cause it to flee.

Hurling stones at it from a sling is like hurling bits of chaff at it.

29 A club that someone might use against it would not hurt it any more than chaff would.

It can ignore any spear that someone might throw at it.

30 Scales as sharp as broken pieces of pottery cover its belly.

When it drags itself through the mud,

these scales tear up the ground.

31 As it swims through the deep water of the ocean,
it churns it into foam,
as if it were boiling water or ointment that someone was stirring.

32 As it swims through the water, it creates a glistening wake.
The churning water is like white hair on top of the deep sea.

33 There is nothing in the world like Leviathan.
I created it in such a way that it would not be afraid of anything.

34 Nothing else scares it, no matter how powerful that thing may be.
It is greater than the greatest of other creatures."

42 **1** Then Job replied to Yahweh. He said,

2 "Now I realize that you can do anything you want.
No one can stop you from doing what you want to do.

3 You told me that I had been speaking ignorantly, and that as a result, I was making it harder for people to understand your actions.
I will admit that I was speaking about things that I did not understand.
Those things were very amazing,
and I did not really know what I was talking about.

4 You told me that I should listen and let you talk because you were going to ask me some questions. You wanted me to try to answer them.
But I will admit that I am not able to answer the questions you asked.

5 I had previously heard many things about you.
But now I have actually seen you!

6 Therefore I am ashamed of myself for what I said.
I am sitting in dust and ashes to show that I am sorry for what I said."

7 When Yahweh had finished speaking with Job, he spoke to Eliphaz, Job's friend from the town of Teman. He said, "I am very angry with you and your two friends. I am angry because you did not say true things about me the way Job did. He serves me faithfully. **8** So now you must bring seven young bulls and seven rams to Job, that man who serves me faithfully. While

he is with you, kill these animals and burn them as a sacrifice for yourselves. Then Job will pray for you, and I will do what he asks me to do for you. I will not punish you for speaking foolishly about me. You deserve for me to punish you because you did not say the right things about me as Job did. He serves me faithfully." **9** So Eliphaz, Job's friend from the town of Teman; Bildad, Job's friend from the Shuhite people group; and Zophar, Job's friend from the town of Naamah, did what Yahweh had commanded them to do. Then Job prayed for his friends, and Yahweh forgave them as Job asked him to do.

10 After Job had prayed for his three friends, Yahweh healed him and made him wealthy again. Yahweh gave him twice as much wealth as he had before. **11** Then Job's family and friends came to his house and had a feast with him. All of his brothers and sisters came, and all of his former acquaintances also came. They cheered him up now that all of the troubles were over that Yahweh had allowed to happen to him. Each of them gave Job a valuable piece of silver and a gold earring.

12 Yahweh blessed Job more in the second part of his life than he had blessed him in the first part of his life. Job acquired 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 pairs of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. **13** Job also had seven more sons and three more daughters. **14** He named the first daughter Jemimah. He named the second daughter Keziah. And he named the third daughter Keren Happuch. **15** Job's three daughters were the most beautiful women in the whole land of Uz. As their father, Job declared that his daughters would each receive an inheritance from him, just as their brothers would.

16 After God restored Job's prosperity, he lived for 140 more years. His new children had children of their own. Then his grandchildren had children of their own, so Job was even able to get to know his great-grandchildren. **17** Job finally died after living a good long life.

Psalms

Book One

1

1 The person who will have a truly good life
is the person who does not do what evil people tell him to do,
who does not imitate sinful people's behavior,
and who does not become like people who enjoy mocking.
2 Instead, he delights in what Yahweh teaches,
he thoughtfully reads it aloud every day and every night.
3 Like having plenty of water causes a well-cultivated tree
to produce fruit at the right time,
and keeps it from dying,
so **his faithfulness to Yahweh** causes everything this person does to prosper.

4 That is not what wicked people are like!
Instead, they are like chaff that the wind blows away.
5 Just so, wicked people will not be able to endure **when Yahweh** judges **the world**.
Neither will sinful people **be present when Yahweh** gathers all the righteous people together.

6 **All of this is** because Yahweh cares for righteous people,
but wicked people keep sinning until **Yahweh** destroys them **forever**.

2

1 Foreign kingdoms are scheming,
and people groups are planning, but it is useless.
2 Earthly kings prepare to revolt,
the rulers plot together to fight
against Yahweh and against his chosen king.

3 They shout, "We should break free from the shackles that they control us with.
We should throw aside the ropes that they rule over us with!"

4 But the heavenly ruler sneers at them;
the Lord ridicules those rulers.
5 Then he speaks to them angrily.
He terrifies them by showing them how furious he is.
6 Yahweh says, "It is I who has made my king rule in Zion,
which is my sacred hill."

7 Yahweh's king says, "I will proclaim what Yahweh has decreed.
Yahweh said to me, 'You are my son;
today I have become your father.
8 Request this from me:
ask to inherit the nations,
ask to own the whole earth even the farthest parts.
I will give them to you.
9 You will strike them with an iron rod
and they will shatter into small pieces as if they were a clay pot.'"

10 So then, you kings should act wisely!
All rulers on the earth should allow Yahweh and his king to correct them!
11 Worship Yahweh respectfully.
Be joyful and afraid while you are worshiping him!
12 Swear to be truly loyal to his son
otherwise, he may become angry
and suddenly kill you
because he can become angry quickly.
But all those who ask him to protect them will have a life that is truly good.

3

David wrote this psalm when he was fleeing from his son Absalom.

1 Yahweh, I have so many enemies!

Many people are deciding to oppose me.

2 Many people are saying about me,

"God will not rescue him." *Selah*

3 But Yahweh, you are like a shield that protects me.

You greatly honor me, and you encourage me.

4 Whenever I cry loudly to Yahweh **for help**,

he **comes** from **Zion,** his sacred hill, to help me. *Selah*

5 I **can** lie down and sleep, **knowing that** I **will** wake up

because Yahweh guards me **all night**.

6 There may be thousands **of enemy soldiers** who surround me,

but I am not afraid.

7 Yahweh, get up!

My God, rescue me!

You can **insultingly** slap my enemies on their cheeks,

and destroy those wicked people's **power like breaking animals'** teeth,

8 Yahweh rescues!

Bless your people! *Selah*

4

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this psalm to be accompanied by people playing stringed instruments.

1 Righteous God, respond to me when I pray to you.

You who have **always** rescued me when I was distressed,

act mercifully toward me and pay attention to what I pray.

2 How long will you mortal people dishonor me instead of honoring me?

How long will you love what is useless, and chase lies? *Selah*

3 You all should know that Yahweh treats people who are faithful to him as special to him.

Yahweh will pay attention when I pray to him.

4 You should be afraid of Yahweh, and **because of that** stop sinning!

While you lie on your bed, examine what you are thinking and stop accusing **me**.

Selah

5 Instead, offer to Yahweh the proper sacrifices
and continually trust him.

6 Many people are wishing for something good to happen.
Yahweh, please do good things for us!

7 You have made me very joyful,
even more than **these complainers are** when they have plenty of food and drink.

8 I can lie down at night and sleep without worrying
because **I know that** it is only you, Yahweh, who keeps me safe.

5

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this psalm to be accompanied by people playing flutes.

1 Yahweh, listen to what I say!
Comprehend my distressed sigh.

2 **Since** you are my king and my God,
hear and respond when I plead aloud for rescuing,
because I am praying to you **only**.

3 Yahweh, you will hear me pleading each morning.
Every morning I will request that you save me, and I will wait for you to do it.

4 You are a God who certainly does not approve of wicked people;
evil-doers never stay as your guests.

5 Boasters are not allowed to come worship you.
You hate everyone who does evil things.

6 You kill liars.
Yahweh despises murderers and people who deceive others.

7 As for me, I will come **worship you** where you live, because you faithfully love us so abundantly.
I will reverently kneel to worship you at your sacred temple.

8 Yahweh, my enemies are watching me **to try to catch me doing something wrong**.

Please show me how to do what is right, just as you always do what is right.

Make it easy for me to live obediently to you.

9 Please do this because my enemies are untrustworthy;

one of their strongest desires is to destroy people.

They speak things that are vile like the smell of an open grave.

They flatter people **to trap and destroy them**.

10 O God, declare that they are guilty and punish them.

Cause to happen to them the harmful events that they plan to cause to happen to others.

Get rid of them because they have sinned often,

and rebelled against you.

11 But enable all the people who ask you to protect them to be glad;

enable them to sing gladly always.

Please protect them.

Enable everyone who loves it when you are famous to praise you.

12 **I ask this** because Yahweh, you always bless those who act righteously;

you protect them as if your good acts are like a shield around them.

6

This is a note for the worship leader: Musicians playing stringed instruments should accompany this song. Perform it in a low range. David wrote this psalm.

1 Yahweh, do not correct me angrily,

do not punish me wrathfully.

2 Yahweh, act kindly toward me because I have become weak.

Yahweh, heal me because my body shakes fearfully.

3 Yahweh, I am greatly troubled in my inner being.

How long must I endure this?

4 Yahweh, relent from your anger and deliver me!

Help me because you always do what you promise!

5 **Do this** because **I and** no one **else** who is dead can honor you.

I and no one **else** can praise you **if we are** in the place where the dead are.

6 I am exhausted because of my pain.
I cry all night long, so that my tears soak
and seem as if they will wash away my bed and my cushions.
7 I am very sad and **I cry so much that** I cannot see well.
My vision has become weak from **crying because of** all my enemies.

8 **I advise** all you people who do evil things to get away from me
because Yahweh heard me when I was crying;
9 he heard me when I called out for him to help me,
and he will answer my prayer.
10 **When that happens,** all my enemies will be ashamed and very troubled.
They will relent **from attacking me because they will** suddenly **be** ashamed.

7

A psalm that David sang to Yahweh because of a Benjamite named Cush.

1 Yahweh my God, I have come to you so that you can protect me.
Save me from everyone who is chasing me **in order to harm me**. Rescue me!
2 If you do not do that, they will maul me like a lion **does when it attacks the animals it wants to kill**;
they shred me and there is not a rescuer.
3 My God Yahweh, suppose that I have done these things,
that I am really guilty.
4 Suppose that I have harmed my ally,
maybe I **was unfaithful to my ally and instead** rescued an enemy for no reason.
5 Then allow my enemies to chase and capture me.
Allow them to stomp me into the ground
and leave me lying **dead** in the dirt. *Selah*
6 Get up Yahweh!
Because you are angry, show that you are greater than what my furious enemies can do!
Be alert so you can rescue me by doing what you have said is just!
7 The people of all nations gather around you;

return to ruling over them all!

8 Yahweh, judge the people of all nations!

Decide favorably for me, Yahweh,

because I am righteous and honorable **before you the** highest judge.

9 God, you are righteous and look closely at what people think and want.

Please stop evil people from doing wicked things,

and make **all of us** who are righteous secure!

10 God, you protect me as a shield protects soldiers;

you rescue all those who are righteous in their inner being.

11 God judges everyone correctly.

God condemns **the wicked** constantly.

12 Whenever the wicked do not repent, it is as though God sharpens his sword

and puts a string on his bow **to get ready to kill them**.

13 He prepares his deadly weapons to kill **the wicked**,

he makes his arrows have flaming tips.

14 Look at the wicked person who is filled with evil intentions, as though pregnant with them,

who plans to trouble people like conceiving a child,

and who lies as naturally as giving birth.

15 If he digs a deep pit to trap others,

he will fall into his own trap.

16 He experiences the bad things that he wants to cause to others,

he hurts himself by the violent things that he wants to do to others.

17 I thank Yahweh because he always acts justly,

I sing to praise Yahweh, who is the highest judge, and to make him famous.

8

This is a note for the worship leader: Accompany the song with a stringed instrument. David wrote this psalm.

1 Our Lord Yahweh, people all over the world know how impressive you are!

You have made the sky show **everyone** how grand you are **every time anyone looks at it**!

2 When anyone who is weak cries for help like nursing little children cry for help,
you listen and protect them from your enemies, the ones that want to hurt your people.
In order to protect them, you destroy enemies who want to harm them in return for what you have justly done to them.
3 I look up at the sky at night
and see the things that you have made—
the moon and the stars that you have set in place.
4 It is amazing to me that you think about people,
that you are concerned about humans!
5 In fact though, you made humans to be just slightly lower than heavenly beings.
You made humans to be glorious and majestic like you.
6 You put humans in charge of everything that you made,
you made them rule over all things—
7 over all the domestic animals like sheep, goats, and cattle,
the wild animals too,
8 the birds in the sky,
the fish in the sea,
and everything else that swims in the ocean.
9 Our Lord Yahweh,
people all over the world know how impressive you are!

9

This is a note to the worship leader: David wrote this song to the tune of "The Death of the Son."

1 Yahweh, I will praise you with all of my inner being.
I will tell others about all the wonderful things that you have done.
2 You make me extremely happy, so I will sing to celebrate what you, who are much greater than all other spirit beings, have done.
3 When my foes flee from your righteous anger,
they trip and fall. You kill them just by being near them.

4 **You are angry because** you have found my legal case to be righteous **and my enemies' to be wicked**.

You sit on a throne **like a king** judging **everything** rightly.

5 You reprimanded the people from other nations, and killed the wicked people;

you eradicate them so thoroughly no one will ever remember their names.

6 Nothing remains of our enemies except the ruins

of their cities which you permanently destroyed.

No one even remembers those enemies anymore.

7 But Yahweh rules forever.

He is prepared to judge from his throne.

8 He will judge all the people in the world justly;

he will be fair when he judges the people of every nation.

9 Let Yahweh be like a fortress for those whom oppressors oppress;

like a strong fort for them when they have trouble.

10 Those who know your reputation should trust you;

because you, Yahweh, never abandon those who come to you **for help**.

11 Yahweh rules on Mount Zion;

praise him by singing to him!

Tell people from every nation the marvelous things that he has done.

12 Do this because Yahweh always remembers to repay any person who murders another person.

When someone's enemy has oppressed him, and when that person calls to Yahweh to help him, Yahweh does not forget to avenge him.

13 Yahweh, act mercifully toward me!

You who rescue me when I am almost dead, look at the ways that my enemies have oppressed me.

14 **I want to live** in order to tell all your people at the entrance to Jerusalem all the reasons to praise you

and to rejoice because you rescued me.

15 **When you rescue me** it is like wicked people of many nations had dug a pit for me to fall into,

but have fallen into that same pit,

or like they hid a net to catch me,

but their feet have been caught in that same net.

16 So you allow the traps that wicked people make to trap them.

Because of that, people can discover that you, Yahweh, are just.

17 Wicked people will flee **from you** back to the place where dead people stay. *Higgaion Selah*

There are people there from every nation, people who have forgotten **to worship the true** God.

18 This all happens because there is a certain time when God will remember **to take care of** poor people.

It is good for oppressed people to expect him to rescue them because he will do it one day.

19 Yahweh, do something! Do not let **evil** people win!

Bring them to your court and judge them!

20 Yahweh, teach them that they must be afraid of you and honor you.

Cause **the rulers of** nations to know that they are mortal. *Selah*

10

1 Yahweh, please do not stay far away from us.

Please let us find you when enemies threaten us.

2 Wicked people proudly chase people until they can oppress them.

Yahweh, please make the bad things they plan to do to others happen to them instead.

3 A wicked person even brags about what he strongly wants to do.

He praises people who unjustly take things from other people. He curses Yahweh.

4 The wicked person is so proud that he does not care **about God**.

He plans **to do evil things** as if there was no God.

5 What he does always prospers.

He ignores doing what you say is right.

He makes a mocking noise at all his enemies.

6 He thinks, “Nothing bad can happen to me!

As long as I live, nothing will trouble me.”

7 He constantly curses, lies, and threatens others.

He is always talking about harming others and doing wrong.

8 He hides outside villages to surprise attack people.

From his secret spot he kills people who have done nothing wrong.

From there he sneakily watches for some unlucky person.

9 He hides in a secret spot like a lion, **crouching** in the bushes,

waiting for people to catch and oppress.

He catches people and drags them away in a net to oppress them.

10 The wicked person makes sure everything is properly prepared

so he can oppress his unlucky victim.

11 He convinces himself, “God is not recording what I do.

He is not paying attention; he will never notice.”

12 Do something, Yahweh! Prove that you are powerful, God!

Pay attention to oppressed people!

13 Do not let wicked people curse you, God!

Do not let him believe that you do not care about his evil deeds!

14 Surely you see everything! You pay attention to how wicked people hurt and frustrate other people so that you can punish those wicked people.

Unlucky people trust that you will protect them. You help orphans.

15 Cause people who are always doing very evil things to become powerless!

When someone tries to oppress other people may he discover he cannot do it.

16 Yahweh reigns eternally!

Foreign people no longer occupy his land.

17 Yahweh, when oppressed people ask you to help, you listen

and encourage them. You pay close attention,

18 so you can act justly for the orphans and oppressed people.

You will stop any mere human from ever terrifying them again.

11

1 ***This is a note for the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.***

I trust that Yahweh will protect me.

So do not say to me, “You need to escape to the mountains like birds do,

2 because wicked people have hidden in the darkness.

They have pulled back their bowstrings and aimed their arrows

to shoot them at godly people **like you**.

3 When people are not punished for doing wrong things,

there is nothing righteous people can do.”

4 But Yahweh is in his holy sanctuary, he reigns from heaven,

and he watches and examines **everything that** people do.

5 Yahweh examines what righteous people do and what wicked people do,

and he hates those who love to do violent things.

6 May he send down from the sky traps upon the wicked,

and may Yahweh punish them with fire and burning sulfur and scorching hot winds.

7 Yahweh is completely righteous, and he loves when people do what is righteous.

People who do what is right will be able to come into his presence.

12

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song. Perform it in a low range.

1 Yahweh, help us!

It seems like people who honor you are no more.

2 Everyone tells lies to other people;

they deceive others by saying good things about them that they know are not true and by speaking insincerely.

3 Yahweh, we wish that you would cut off their tongues

so that they cannot continue to boast.

4 They say, “By speaking untruthfully we will get what we want;

we control what we say, no one can tell us what we should do!”

5 **But** Yahweh replies, “I have seen the oppressive things that they have done to helpless people;

I have heard those people groaning,

so I will take action and rescue the people who are wanting someone to help them."

6 Yahweh, what you say is morally pure and you always do what you have said you will do.

Your words are **as precious and pure as** silver

that has been heated seven times in a furnace **to get rid of all the impure material**.

7 Yahweh, we know that you will continually protect us who honor you

from those wicked people.

8 When people praise wicked actions,

wicked people strut around **proudly**.

13

This is a note to the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.

1 Yahweh, how long will you continue to not answer me?

How long will you hide yourself from me?

2 How long must I think about my problems within myself?

Must I be miserable every day?

How long will my enemy defeat me?

3 Yahweh, my God, pay attention to me and respond to me.

Restore my strength by giving me what I have hoped for, or I will die

4 and then my enemy would say, "I have defeated him,"

and those who are against me would celebrate when they had defeated me.

5 But I trust that you will faithfully love me;

may I rejoice when you rescue me.

6 Yahweh will do good things for me,

so I will sing to him.

14

1 ***This is a note for the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.***

Only foolish people say to themselves, "There is no God!"

People who say those things do corrupt deeds;

they do detestable deeds;

hardly anyone does what is right.

2 Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees humans;
he looks to see if there are any wise people,
with the result that they are wise enough that they desire to know him.

3 But they all do evil and corrupt things;
no one does what is right.

4 All the people who make a practice of doing wicked things do not take seriously the fact that Yahweh is going to punish them!
They act violently toward Yahweh's people and want to consume them like they consume bread.
These evil people never pray to Yahweh.

5 But in the future, at the place God will judge wicked people, they will become very terrified
because God will help those who act righteously.

6 You evil people try to humiliate poor people,
but Yahweh will protect them.

7 I wish that Yahweh would come from where he dwells in Jerusalem and rescue us Israelite people!
When Yahweh blesses us, his people again,
then all of us Israelite people will rejoice.

15

1 ***A psalm of David.***
Yahweh, who is allowed to enter your sacred tent?
Who is allowed to live on your sacred mountain?

2 Those whose behavior is faultless
and who do righteous things,
and who speak the truth.

3 They do not slander others.
They do not do to others things that are wrong,
and they do not say bad things about their friends.

4 They despise the people God abhors,

but they respect those who revere Yahweh.

They do what they have promised to do,

even if it causes them trouble to do that.

5 They lend money to others without charging interest,

and they never accept bribes in order to lie about people who have not done anything wrong.

Those who do those things will always live in safety.

16

1 ***A song of David.***

God, protect me, because I go to you to keep me safe!

2 I said to Yahweh, "You are my Lord;

all the good things that I have come from you."

3 People who try to live holy lives, they are wonderful;

I greatly delight in them.

4 Those who choose to worship other gods will have many things that cause them to be sad.

I will not join them when they make sacrifices **to their gods**,

and I will not join them in speaking the names of their gods.

5 Yahweh, you have granted to me that I would belong to you, and you supply all of my needs.

You control what happens to me.

6 Yahweh has greatly blessed me;

I am delighted with all the things that he has given me.

7 I will praise Yahweh, the one who teaches me;

even during the night he puts in my mind the right things for me to do.

8 I have chosen to always think about Yahweh. Because he is the one who strengthens and supports me,

he will save me from anything that might trouble me.

9 Therefore I am very glad,

and I can rest securely,

10 because you, Yahweh, will save me from going to the place where dead people go,
yes, you will save me, a godly person, from dying.
11 You reveal to me how to live in a way that will make me joyful now and will result in receiving eternal life in the future.
You make me joyful when I am with you.
You give pleasures forever.

17

1 A prayer of David

Yahweh, listen to me while I plead with you to act justly toward me.
Hear me while I call out to you to help me.
Pay attention to what I say while I pray
because I am speaking honestly.
2 May you declare that I am innocent;
may you decide what is right.
3 You know what I think, even during the night.
You have examined me and not found anything that grieves you.
I have determined that I will not sin by what I say.
4 Regarding the actions of people,
according to what you have commanded, I have carefully avoided living a violent life.
5 I have carefully obeyed what you told me to do;
I have not failed to do those things.
6 O God, I am praying to you because I know that you will answer me;
please listen to what I am saying.
7 Wonderfully show how you faithfully love me;
you who rescue with your great power the people who trust you to protect them from their enemies.
8 Protect me as carefully as people protect their own eyes;
protect me like mother birds protect their babies under their wings.
9 Do not allow wicked people to attack me,

those enemies of mine who surround me, wanting to kill me.

10 They never pity anyone,

and they are always speaking boastfully.

11 They have searched for me and found me.

They surround me, watching for an opportunity to attack and kill me.

12 These wicked people are like lions that are ready to tear **apart their prey**.

They are like young lions that are hiding, waiting **to pounce on their prey**.

13 Yahweh, come and oppose my enemies and make them fall to the ground when you defeat them!

Take violent action and deliver me from wicked men!

14 Yahweh, by your power rescue me from those people who are interested **only** in things here in this world.

You provide them with many good things.

They have many children and **when they die,** they leave their wealth to their descendants.

15 **Yahweh**, because I act in the right way, I will see you.

When I wake up I will see you, and then I will be happy.

18

This is a note to the worship leader: David, God's servant, wrote this psalm. He sang this song to Yahweh after Yahweh had rescued him from Saul and his other enemies.

1 This is what he sang: "Yahweh, I love you, the one who enables me to be strong.

2 Yahweh, you are like a huge rock and like a fortress **where I can go to be safe**. I can be confident that you will rescue me when I am in trouble. You are my God. You protect me. I am as safe as I would be if I were hiding on top of a cliff. It is as if you are a shield that defends me. You are the powerful God who saves me. You are like a high place **where I am safe from my enemies**.

3 You deserve for people to praise you, Yahweh. When I cry to you **for help**, you rescue me from my enemies.

4 **Someone was trying to kill me, and** I was in such danger of dying that it was as if someone was trying to tie ropes around me. His wicked plans against me were like floodwaters that were carrying me away, and this made me very afraid.

5 I did not think I could escape going to the place where dead people go. It was as
if that place had wrapped ropes around me and was pulling me down into it. It
was as if the only direction I could walk was right into a trap where I would
surely die.

6 But when I was very distressed, I cried out to you, Yahweh my God. From your
temple in heaven you could hear me calling to you, and you listened to my
prayer.

7 It made you so angry **that someone was trying to kill me, and you responded so
powerfully** that it was as if there was a great earthquake and as if you shook the
foundations of the mountains.

8 **Your power was so great that** it was as if there was a volcano from which smoke
was rising, a stream of fire was flowing out that burned up everything in its path,
and hot coals were flying into the air that started fires where they landed.

9 **Your power was so great** when you came **to help me that** it was as if there was a
great thunderstorm, with only a little sky visible below the low-hanging dark
clouds.

10 He flew, riding on the back of an angel traveling fast, which the wind was
blowing along.

11 It was as if you had made the darkness of the storm a safe place for you to stay.
Yes, it was as if you had a temporary shelter within the dark storm clouds that
were full of moisture.

12 It was as if it became bright where you were within the clouds, and then
hailstones and lightning bolts came from there.

13 It was as if there was a loud sound of thunder in the sky because you, Yahweh,
the God who is greater than all other spirit beings, had spoken **to announce that
you were coming to rescue me**, and as if hailstones and coals of fire **continued to
come**.

14 It was as if you sent many flashes of lightning that made my enemies so afraid
that they ran away in different directions, as if you had shot arrows at them.

15 The bottom of the ocean became visible, and the water uncovered the
foundations of the earth when Yahweh rebuked his enemies
with the breath that came in his anger!

16 It was as if you reached down from heaven and grabbed me so that you could
pull me up out of the deep water of the ocean.
17 There was a powerful man who wanted to harm me, and there were people who
hated me. They were too strong for me to defeat, but you rescued me from them.
18 They attacked me, and they would have destroyed me, but you, Yahweh,
protected me.
19 You brought me to a place where I was safe. You love me, and so you rescued
me.
20 Yahweh, you did good things for me because I did what was right. I did not harm
my enemies, so you made sure that they did not harm me.
21 Yahweh, I have lived as you want people to live. I have not stopped obeying you,
my God, and done wicked things instead.
22 I have remained aware of what you have said people should do, and I have
continued to obey all your laws.
23 I have not done anything for which you would blame me. I have been careful not
to do anything for which you would punish me.
24 You have done good things for me because I did what is right. You recognize that
I am innocent.
25 When people are loyal to you, you act loyally toward them; when people are
careful to do what you want them to do, you do good things for them.
26 You allow sincere people to recognize how sincere you are. But when people try
to trick others, you show that you are much more clever than they are.
27 You rescue people whom others are afflicting, but you humiliate those who are
proud.
28 Yahweh my God, it is as if you light my lamp so that I can see even when it is
dark.
29 With your help I have caught and defeated a band of raiders. With your help I
have captured a city that had walls around it, as if I had leaped over those walls.
30 My God, everything that you do is perfect. Everything that you say is right. You
protect everyone who depends on you, as if you are a shield that defends them.
31 Yahweh, you are the only real God. Only you are like a huge rock **where I can go
to be safe**.

32 My God, you enable me to be strong like someone who equips me for war. You
make sure that nothing prevents me from doing what you want me to do.

33 You enable me to walk about safely in the mountains, as a deer does, without
falling.

34 You teach me how to fight in a battle. You give me the strength to bend **and
string** a bronze bow.

35 You have saved me by protecting me like a shield, you are strong and therefore
keep me safe. You humble yourself and answer my prayers and this is what has
made me successful.

36 You have given me many ways to respond to each situation. As a result, I have
been able to carry out my plans successfully.

37 I chased my enemies and defeated them. I did not stop fighting them until I had
killed them all.

38 I wounded them so badly that the ones who fell to the ground never got up
because they died of their wounds.

39 You have given me the strength and courage to fight battles. When people
revolted against me, you enabled me to subdue them.

40 You enabled me to defeat my enemies and step in triumph on their necks. You
gave me power over those who hated me so that I was able to destroy them.

41 They called out for someone to rescue them, but no one did. They cried out **for
help** to you, Yahweh, but you did not help them.

42 I defeated them so completely that they were no longer any threat to me, no more
than tiny particles of dust that the wind blows away would be. It was as if they
were dirt that I threw out into the street.

43 You rescued me from the Israelites who tried to rebel against me. You appointed
me as the ruler of many nations. Foreign people are now my subjects.

44 When they heard about what Yahweh enabled me to do, they obeyed me. Foreign
rulers fearfully bow down in front of me **to show their submission**.

45 I defeat foreign armies that resist me so that they become weak, like a plant that
dries up in the sun. They surrender and come out of their walled cities shaking
with weakness and fear.

46 Yahweh, you are the only real God! I praise you! You are like a huge rock **where
I can go to be safe**! You are the God who rescues me. Everyone should exalt you.

47 You are the God who enables me to conquer enemies who have attacked me. You cause the people of other nations to be subject to my rule.

48 You kept my enemies from capturing me. People rebelled against me, but it as if their armies had been floodwaters and you lifted me out of them to safety. You rescued me from men who tried to harm me.

49 Because of all this, I thank you, Yahweh, so that all people groups will know that you are the one who has helped me. I will sing to praise you for what you have done that has made you famous.

50 You chose me to be king, and you have done great things to save me from my enemies. You faithfully show kindness to me, David, whom you anointed as king, as well as to my descendants forever."

19

This is a note to the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.

1 **When people look at everything that** God **has placed** in the skies, they can see that he is very great.

Yes, the way God made the sky shows people that he is powerful.

2 Day after day **it is as though the sun** proclaims the glory of God,

and night after night **it is as though the moon and stars** say that God made them.

3 They do not really speak;

they do not say any words.

There is no sound from them for anyone to hear.

4 But what they declare **about God** goes throughout all the world,

and **even people who live in** the most distant places on earth can know it.

The sun is in the skies where God placed it;

5 it rises each morning like a bridegroom **who is happy** as he comes out of his bedroom after his wedding.

It is like a strong athlete who is very eager to start running in a race.

6 The sun rises at one side of the sky and goes across the sky and sets on the other side,

and there is nothing that is unaffected by its heat.

7 The instructions that Yahweh has given us are perfect;

they keep us from living in a way that would cause God to condemn us.
We can be sure that the things that Yahweh has told us are trustworthy,
and by learning them people who have not been previously taught will become wise.

8 Yahweh's laws are fair;
when we obey them, we become joyful.
The commands of Yahweh are morally perfect,
and **by learning them** we start to understand **how God wants us to behave**.

9 The law of Yahweh causes people to revere him and therefore live in a morally upright way;
that is something that will endure forever.
The things Yahweh has decreed are true,
they are completely righteous.

10 Yahweh's commandments are more valuable than gold,
even great amounts of the purest gold.
Learning the things Yahweh teaches us through them is more pleasurable than eating honey,
than honey dripping from honeycombs.

11 Furthermore, by your commandments I am warned **about what things I should not do**.
You greatly reward those who obey them.

12 There is no one who can know all his sins;
so Yahweh, forgive me for these things which I do that I do not realize are wrong.

13 Also, keep me from doing things that I know are wrong;
do not let my sinful desires control me.
If you do that, then I will be guiltless,
and I will not be guilty of committing any great sin.

14 I pray that both what I say, and what I think about,
be pleasing to you,
Yahweh, you who enable me to be strong and who redeem me.

20

This is a note to the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.

1 I desire that Yahweh will answer you **when you call out to him** when you are in a crisis!

I desire that Yahweh, the God whom **our ancestor** Jacob worshiped, will protect you **from your enemies**.

2 I desire that he may come from his sacred temple and help you,

and aid you from **where he lives** on Mount Zion.

3 I desire that he may accept all your grain offerings

and accept all your **other** offerings that you give him to be burned **on the altar**. *Selah*

4 I want him to give you what you desire,

and I want him to allow you to be able to accomplish everything that you have planned to do.

5 When you defeat your enemies, we will shout joyfully.

We will lift up a banner proclaiming that it is Yahweh our God **who helps us**.

I desire Yahweh to do everything that you have requested him to do.

6 I know now that Yahweh rescues the one whom he has chosen **to be king**.

From his holy place in heaven he will answer him,

and he will save him by his great power.

7 Some **kings** trust that because they have chariots **they will be able to defeat their enemies**,

and some trust that their horses **will enable them to defeat their enemies**,

but we will trust in the power of Yahweh our God.

8 Some will stumble and fall down,

but we will be strong and not be moved.

9 Yahweh, enable your king **to defeat our enemies**!

We desire that the king answer us when we cry out **for help**.

21

This is a note to the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.

1 Yahweh, **your** king is glad because you have enabled him to be strong

and because you have rescued him **from his enemies**; indeed, how exceedingly he rejoices.

2 You have given **your** king the things he desired,
and you have not refused to do what he requested you to do. *Selah*

3 In answer to his prayer, you bless him with many good things.
You place a gold crown on his head.

4 He asked you to let him live for a long time,
and you have enabled him to live for a long time.

5 People honor him greatly because you have helped him defeat his enemies.

6 You have made him famous. You bless him forever,
and you cause him to be joyful in your presence.

7 The king trusts in you, Yahweh,
and because you, who are much greater than all other spirit beings, faithfully love him,

8 you will protect him. You, the king, will defeat all your enemies;
yes, you will surely defeat all those who hate you.

9 When you, the king, appear, you will so completely destroy them that it will be as if you threw them into a fiery furnace.
Because Yahweh is angry with them, he will decimate them so completely that it will be as if he swallowed them whole or burned them up.

10 You, the king, will remove their children from this earth;
their descendants will all disappear.

11 They want to harm you,
but what they plan will never succeed.

12 You will cause them to run away
by shooting arrows at them.

13 Yahweh, show everyone how very strong you are!
When you do that, we will sing and praise you because you are very powerful.

22

This is a note to the worship leader: David wrote this song. The tune is "The Doe of the Dawn."

1 My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why do you not come and help me?

Why do you not respond to me when **I am suffering so severely that** I am groaning?

2 My God, every day I call to you during the daytime and during the night,

but you do not answer me, so I am not able to sleep.

3 But you are holy.

You sit on your throne as king, and receive praise in your sacred tent from your people Israel.

4 Our ancestors trusted in you.

They trusted in you and you rescued them.

5 When they cried out to you for help, you saved them.

They trusted in you, and they were not disappointed.

6 But you have not rescued me!

People despise me and consider that I am not a man;

they think that I am a worm!

Everyone scorns me and despises me.

7 Everyone who sees me makes fun of me.

They sneer at me and **insult me by** shaking their heads **at me**. **8** **My enemies say,** "He trusts in Yahweh,

so Yahweh should save him!

He says that Yahweh is very pleased with him;

if that is so, Yahweh should rescue him!"

9 You, God, have been with me since I was in my mother's womb,

and you taught me to trust you when I was at my mother's breasts.

10 It was as though you had adopted me right when I was born.

You have been my God ever since I was born.

11 Come near to me **and help me,**

because my enemies are near me

and there is no one who is helping me.

12 My enemies surround me like a group of wild bulls.

Fierce people, like those strong bulls that graze on the hills in the region of Bashan, surround me.

13 They are like roaring lions that are attacking the animals that they want to kill.

They rush toward me to kill me;

they are like lions that have their mouths open, ready to tear their victims to pieces.

14 I am completely exhausted,

and am in much pain!

15 I feel greatly discouraged! My strength is all dried up

like a broken piece of a clay jar that has dried in the sun.

You have allowed me to become so thirsty that my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

Oh God, I think that you are about to let my body die and become dust!

16 My enemies surround me like a pack of wild dogs.

A group of evil men has encircled me, ready to attack me.

They have pierced my hands and my feet.

17 I am so weak and thin that I can see and count my bones.

My enemies stare at me and gloat about what has happened to me.

18 They looked at the clothes that I was wearing

and gambled to determine which piece each of them would get.

19 Yahweh, do not be like my enemies; rather be concerned for me.

You who are the one who strengthens me,

come quickly and help me.

20 Rescue me from those who want to kill me with their swords.

Save me from those who are like wild dogs.

21 Snatch me away from my enemies who are like lions whose jaws are already open, ready to chew me up!

Grab me away from those men who are like wild oxen that attack other animals with their horns!

22 **Because you have saved me,** I will proclaim to my fellow Israelites how great you are.

I will praise you among the group of your people gathered together **to worship you**.

23 You people who have an awesome respect for Yahweh, praise him!

All you who are descended from Jacob, honor Yahweh!

All you Israelite people, revere him!

24 Yahweh does not despise or ignore those who are suffering.

He pays attention to them,

and he responds when they call out to him **for help**.

25 Yahweh, in the great gathering **of your people,** I will praise you for what you have done.

In the presence of those who revere Yahweh, I will offer **the sacrifice** that I promised **to make to you because you delivered me**.

26 The poor people **whom I have invited to the meal** will eat as much as they want.

All who come to worship Yahweh will praise him.

I pray that **God will enable** you all to live a long and happy life!

27 People in all nations, even in the remote areas, will think about Yahweh and turn to him.

People from all the clans in the world will bow down before you,

28 because Yahweh is the king!

He rules the people of all nations.

29 All the rich people on the earth will celebrate and bow before him.

All those who are close to dying will kneel in worship **before him**, yes, those who are not able to keep themselves alive.

30 People who have not been born yet will **also** serve Yahweh.

We will tell our descendants what Yahweh **has done**.

31 People will come and will proclaim to people not yet born, **who will live in future years,** that because Yahweh is righteous **he has delivered those who prayed to him for help**.

People will tell them that, "Yahweh did **it**!"

23

1 ***A psalm of David***

Yahweh **cares for** me **like** a shepherd **cares for his sheep**,

so I **know that I** will have everything that I need.

2 Yahweh nourishes and encourages my inner person and enables me to rest in peace,

like a shepherd who leads **his sheep** to places where there is plenty of green grass **for them to eat**

and leads them to streams where the water is flowing slowly.

3 Yahweh renews my strength.

He gives me good guidance for how I should live,

in order that I, and others, will honor him.

4 Even when I am in dangerous and scary circumstances

in which evil men might kill or hurt me,

I will fear nothing,

because you are with me.

I feel comforted and reassured because you protect and care for me like a shepherd protects his sheep by using his club and his walking stick to protect them from being attacked by wild animals.

5 You **richly** provide food for me and protect me from my enemies.

You joyfully welcome me and honor me

as people joyfully receive the guests they have invited by pouring olive oil over their heads.

You have given me very many blessings!

6 I am certain that Yahweh will be good to me and will continue to love me faithfully as long as I live.

I will worship Yahweh in his sanctuary throughout my life.

24

1 ***A psalm of David***

The earth and everything in it belongs to Yahweh.

All the people in the world belong to him too,

2 because he caused the ground to be above the water,

above the water that was deep below the surface of the earth.

3 This is the type of person who Yahweh will allow to go up onto his mountain,
Mount Zion **in Jerusalem**,

in order to stand **and worship** him in his sacred tent.

4 Only those whose actions and thoughts are pure,

who have not worshiped idols,

and who do not tell lies when they have solemnly promised to speak truthfully.

5 Yahweh will bless this type of person.

When Yahweh **judges them,** he who has saved them, he will say that they are righteous.

6 Such are the ones who seek Yahweh,

the descendants of Jacob,

who seek you, Yahweh. *Selah*

7 Open up the gates **of the sacred tent**,

in order that our glorious king may enter!

8 I will tell you who this glorious king is.

He is Yahweh, the one who is very strong;

He is Yahweh, who conquers **all his enemies** in battles!

9 Open up the gates **of the sacred tent**,

in order that our glorious king may enter!

10 I will tell you who he, this glorious king, is.

He is Yahweh, who commands armies;

he is our glorious king! *Selah*

25

1 ***A psalm of David***

Yahweh, I come to you in prayer and tell you all that I need.

2 I trust in you, my God.

Do not allow my enemies **to defeat me**,

with the result that they would rejoice and I would be ashamed.

3 Truly, you will not allow any of those who trust in you to be ashamed.

You will cause those who act treacherously toward others to be ashamed.

4 Yahweh, show me how I should conduct my life as you want me to.
Teach me how to act in the manner that is pleasing to you.

5 Teach me to conduct my life by obeying your truth,
because you are my God, the one who saves me.
I trust in you at all times.

6 Yahweh, please act mercifully to me and faithfully love me,
because that is the way that you have acted since long ago.

7 Forgive me for the sinful things I did when I was young and for my rebellious actions **as an adult**.
I ask that, because you faithfully love your people, you treat me kindly and forgive me.

Yahweh, I ask that you do this because you are good!

8 Yahweh is good and acts righteously,
so he shows sinful people the right way to conduct their lives.

9 He shows humble people what is right for them to do
and teaches them what he wants them to do.

10 Yahweh always faithfully loves and does what he has promised
to those who obey his covenant and who do what he requires.

11 Yahweh, forgive me for all my sins, which are many,
in order that I and others may honor you.

12 To all those who revere Yahweh,
he shows them the right way to conduct their lives.

13 They will always be prosperous,
and their descendants will continue to live in **this** land.

14 Yahweh is a friend of those who revere him,
and he teaches them the covenant that he made **with them**.

15 I always ask Yahweh to help me,
because he will rescue me when my enemies attempt to hurt me.

16 **Yahweh,** pay attention to me and be merciful to me,
because I have no one to help me and I am suffering.

17 **Because of my present circumstances** there are many things that cause me to worry.

Rescue me from the things that are causing me to be distressed.

18 Take notice that I am in difficult circumstances and troubled,

and forgive me for every sinful thing I have done.

19 Take notice that I have many enemies,

and that they hate me very much.

20 Protect me and rescue me **from them**;

do not allow **them to defeat me**

with the result that I would be ashamed,

because I go to you to keep me safe.

21 Protect me because I do what is good and honest,

and because I trust in you.

22 God, rescue **us** Israelite people from all of our troubles!

26

1 ***A psalm of David***

Yahweh, show that I am innocent.

I have done what is right,

and I have trusted in Yahweh without doubting him.

2 Yahweh, examine what I have done and test me;

thoroughly evaluate what I think in my inner being.

3 I never forget that you faithfully love me.

I conduct my life according to what you say is right.

4 I do not spend my time with liars,

and I stay away from hypocrites.

5 I do not like to be with evil people,

and I avoid wicked people.

6 Yahweh, I wash my hands to show that I have not done what was wrong.

As I join with others marching around your altar,

7 we sing songs to thank you,

and we tell others the wonderful things that you have done.

8 Yahweh, I love **to be in** the sanctuary where you dwell,
in the place where your glory appears.
9 Do not get rid of me like you get rid of sinners.
Do not cause me to die like you cause those who murder people to die,
10 and people who are ready to do wicked things,
and people who are always taking bribes.
11 But as for me, I always try to do what is right.
So rescue me and act kindly toward me.
12 **Because I have conducted myself righteously** I am secure,
and when all Yahweh's people gather together, I praise him among them.

27

1 ***A psalm of David***

Yahweh encourages me and nourishes my inner being. He is the one who saves me,
so I will not fear anyone.
Yahweh is the one to whom I go for refuge,
so I will not dread anyone.
2 When those who do evil things come near me to attack and destroy me,
Yahweh enables me to defeat them so that they fall down.
3 Even if an army sets up their tents in order to attack me,
I will not be afraid.
Even if they attack me,
I will trust **in God**.
4 There is one thing that I have requested from Yahweh,
and that one thing I will repeatedly ask Yahweh for.
This is the one thing I ask of Yahweh: that I may worship in Yahweh's sanctuary every day during my life,
in order to experience how wonderful Yahweh is.
When I am in his sanctuary then I will ask him **for guidance**.
5 When I have troubles he will protect me in his tabernacle;
yes, he will keep me safe in his sacred tent.

He will keep me safe as if he were setting me high upon a rock **where my enemies cannot reach me**.

6 Then I will triumph over my enemies who surround me.
I will shout joyfully as I offer sacrifices in his sacred tent,
and I will praise Yahweh as I sing.

7 Yahweh, listen to me while I call **to you in prayer**.
Act kindly toward me and answer my prayer.

8 **I sensed that I heard you say,** "Seek me and my help,"
so, Yahweh, I will respond by seeking you and your help.

9 I am your servant;
do not be angry with me, or turn away from me.
You have always helped me.
You are the one who has saved me,
so do not abandon me now.

10 My father and mother have left me,
but Yahweh will take care of me.

11 Yahweh, teach me to do what you want me to do,
and guide me so that I remain safe
because I have enemies **who want to hurt me**.

12 Do not allow my enemies to do to me what they want,
because they say false things about me and want violent things to happen to me.

13 I would have died if I had not trusted you
to be good to me as long as I live.

14 Trust in Yahweh.
Have a strong and courageous attitude,
and wait expectantly for Yahweh **to help you**.

28

1 ***A psalm of David***

Yahweh, I call out to you.
You are like a huge rock **on top of which I am safe**.

Do not refuse to answer me

because if you refuse to answer me, I will soon be with those who are in their graves.

2 Pay attention to me and respond when I call out for you to help me

when I pray, lifting up my hands as I face your very holy place in your sacred tent.

3 Do not get rid of me when you get rid of wicked people,

those who do wicked deeds.

Those people speak peacefully toward others,

while in their inner beings, they hate them and devise evil plans.

4 Punish those people in the way that they deserve for what they have done;

punish them for their evil deeds.

5 Yahweh will get rid of them permanently and not let them appear again.

Yahweh **will do this** because these evil people do not pay attention to the righteous things he has taught his people and do not take notice that he always judges evil deeds.

6 Praise Yahweh

because he responded to me when I called out for him to help me.

7 Yahweh strengthens me and he protects me like a shield;

I trust in him, and he helps me.

As a result I am glad in my inner being,

and I will praise him with my songs **of praise**.

8 Yahweh strengthens and protects his people.

Yahweh saves the one he appointed to be king.

9 Yahweh, rescue your people

and bless those who belong to you.

Take care of them like a shepherd takes care of his sheep;

take care of them forever.

29

1 ***A psalm of David***

You heavenly beings, praise Yahweh!

Declare that he is very glorious and powerful.

2 Proclaim that Yahweh is glorious.

Bow down and worship Yahweh in holy attire.

3 **People hear** Yahweh's voice above the sea;

the glorious God thunders.

Yahweh's **voice thunders** over the large sea.

4 Yahweh's voice is powerful and majestic.

5 The sound of Yahweh's voice breaks cedar trees,

the cedars that grow in Lebanon.

6 He causes **the mountains in** Lebanon to jump like calves jump,

and he causes Mount Hermon to jump as a young wild bull jumps.

7 Yahweh tells the lightning to flash **upon the mountains** and it hews out rocks.

8 The sound of Yahweh's voice causes the wilderness to shake;

he shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

9 The sound of Yahweh's voice makes the deer give birth

and strips the leaves from the trees,

while the people in Yahweh's sacred tent say, "Praise Yahweh!"

10 Yahweh rules as king over the waters that are above the sky;

Yahweh rules as king forever.

11 Yahweh will strengthen his people,

and he will bless them by giving them good things and causing them to be happy and peaceful.

30

David wrote this psalm to be sung at the dedication of the tabernacle.

1 Yahweh, I praise you

because you rescued me.

You did not allow **me to die with the result that**

my enemies could gloat.

2 Yahweh my God,

I called out for you to help me **when I was sick,**

you healed me.

3 Yahweh, when I was dying you restored me.
I was nearly dead,
but you caused me to get well.
4 All you who are faithful to Yahweh, sing praise to him.
Think about what Yahweh, the holy one,
has done, and thank him.
5 When he becomes angry,
he is angry for only a very short time,
but he is good **to us** all of our lives.
We may cry during the night,
but the next morning we will be joyful.
6 As for me, when my life was going well,
I said **to myself**,
"Nothing will ever trouble me."
7 Yahweh, because you were good to me,
at first you caused me to be secure as a mountain.
But then you let me become ill when
you stopped protecting me **from illness**,
and I became greatly disturbed.
8 **Then** I called out to you, Yahweh,
and I pleaded for you, the Lord, to help me.
9 **I said,** "**Yahweh,** you will gain nothing if I die.
It will not benefit you at all if I go
to the place where the dead people are.
Dead people certainly are not able to praise you,
and they are not able to tell others that you are faithful.
10 Yahweh, listen to me, and act mercifully to me.
Yahweh, help me."
11 **But now** you have changed my circumstances
and healed me,
and as a result I have stopped grieving

and now dance joyfully.

You have caused me to change from the clothes that showed that I was very sad
and to put on clothes that show that I am very joyful.

12 **You did that** so that I would not be silent
but would sing out to praise you.
Yahweh, you are my God, and I will thank you forever.

31

This is a note to the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.

1 Yahweh, I come to you to protect me.
Never allow **them to defeat me, with the result that** I would be ashamed.
Since you always do what is right and just,
please rescue me.

2 Respond to my prayers for help, and save me right now!
Be **like** a huge rock where I can flee for refuge,
and **like** a strong fortress in which my enemies cannot harm me.

3 **Yes,** you are **like** a huge rock and **like** a fortress **where I can go to be safe**.
For the sake of your reputation you guide me **so that no harm comes to me**.

4 You are the one who protects me,
so you will rescue me from the evil plans my enemies have secretly made to hurt me.

5 I put myself into your care.
You have rescued me.
Yahweh, you are faithful.

6 I hate those who worship useless idols,
but I trust in Yahweh.

7 I will be very glad because you faithfully love me.
You have noticed that I have suffered,
and have known the troubling things I have experienced.

8 You have not allowed my enemies to capture me;
instead, you brought me to a place where I was safe.

9 Yahweh, act kindly toward me

because I am distressed.

Because I cry so much that my eyes are tired,

and I am completely exhausted.

10 I have become very weak because I am so miserable;

my life is getting shorter.

I have become weak because of the sinful things that I have done.

I am totally exhausted.

11 All of my enemies make fun of me,

and my neighbors, especially, despise me.

My friends are afraid of me **because they think that you, God, are punishing me**.

When they see me on the streets, they run away.

12 People have forgotten me like they forget people who are dead.

I am **as useless as** a broken pot.

13 There are terrifying things all around me.

I hear people whispering **things about me**.

My enemies are making plans

to kill me.

14 But Yahweh, I trust in you.

I say **confidently** that you are the God I worship.

15 You control the events and circumstances of my life.

Save me from my enemies,

from those who pursue me.

16 Act kindly toward me

and rescue me because you always faithfully love me.

17 Yahweh, I call out to you,

so do not allow others to shame me.

I desire that you cause wicked people to be ashamed.

I desire that they **soon die and** go down to the place where the dead people are.

18 I desire that you will cause people who tell lies to be unable to speak.

Do that to people who arrogantly say disrespectful things about righteous people.

19 Many indeed are the good things which you have prepared for the people who revere you!

You do good things for those who go to you for protection.

Everyone sees you protect them.

20 You protect people who trust in you by being near to them and saving them from people who devise evil schemes to harm them.

You keep them safe from their enemies who accuse them.

21 Praise Yahweh!

When my enemies surrounded the city in which I was living,

he showed me in a wonderful way that he faithfully loves me.

22 I was alarmed and cried out, "I have been separated from Yahweh!"

But in fact you heard me and answered my cry for help.

23 You people who belong to Yahweh, love him!

Those who are loyal to him, he protects,

but those who are proud, he punishes them severely like they deserve to be punished.

24 You who confidently expect Yahweh to do great things for you,

be strong and be courageous!

32

1 ***A song of David***

Those whom God has forgiven for rebelling against him,

and those whose sin God has atoned for,

these are the ones who will have a truly good life!

2 Those whose record of sins Yahweh no longer takes into account,

and those who are not deceitful,

these are the ones who will have a truly good life!

3 When I did not confess my sins,

my body felt weak and sick,

and I groaned all day long.

4 Day and night, Yahweh, you afflicted me.
My strength was sapped like it would be on a hot summer day. *Selah*

5 **Then** I confessed my sinful actions to you;
I stopped trying to hide them.
I said to myself,
"I will tell Yahweh the wrong things that I have done."
When I confessed them, you forgave me,
so now I am no longer guilty for the sinful things I did. *Selah*

6 Therefore all the people who are godly should pray to you
when they realize they have sinned.
If they do that, then it is certain that difficulties will not overwhelm them like a great flood.

7 You are like a place where I can hide from my enemies;
you protect me from troubles and surround me with people who are joyfully praising you for saving me from my enemies. *Selah*

8 I will teach you about how you should conduct your life.
I will teach you personally.

9 Do not be like horses and mules that do not have understanding;
they need pieces of metal put in their mouth and ropes fastened to their head
so they will go in the direction you want them to go.

10 Wicked people will have many difficult things in their lives that will make them sad,
but those who trust in Yahweh will experience him faithfully loving them all the time.

11 **So, all** you righteous people, rejoice about **what** Yahweh **has done for you**!
All you whose inner beings are pure, be glad and shout joyfully!

33

1 You people who do what is right, shout joyfully because of Yahweh,
because praising him is what upright people should do.

2 Praise Yahweh by playing songs on the harp.
Praise him as you make music for him with instruments that have many strings.

3 Sing a new song to him;
play those instruments well, and shout joyfully as you play them!
4 Do this because everything that Yahweh says is true,
and we can trust that everything that he does is right.
5 He loves everything that people do that is right and just.
Yahweh faithfully loves people all over the earth.
6 Yahweh created everything in the sky by commanding it.
He created all of the stars by speaking.
7 He gathered all the water of the sea into one huge mass
as though scooping it into a container.
8 Everyone on the earth should deeply revere Yahweh.
9 They should revere him because he is the one who spoke, making the world exist.
Everything started to exist because he is the one who commanded it.
10 Yahweh stops the nations from doing what they plan to do.
He prevents the peoples from carrying out what they decide.
11 However, what Yahweh decides to do will last forever.
What he plans to do will never change.
12 What a good life people have when Yahweh is the God of their nation;
he chose those people to belong to him.
13 Yahweh looks down from heaven; he sees all human beings.
14 From the place where he lives he watches
everyone who lives on the earth.
15 He created each person's heart,
and he knows everything that they do.
16 It is not because a king has a great army that he is able to win **battles**,
and it is not because a soldier is very strong that he is able to defeat **his enemy**.
17 It is foolish to hope that a horse can save anyone;
even with its great strength, it cannot rescue **its rider**.
18 Note this: Yahweh watches over those who deeply revere him;

He watches over those who confidently expect him to faithfully love them,

19 to save them from dying

and to preserve them alive through any famine.

20 We trust that Yahweh will take care of us;

he will help us and protect us.

21 Indeed, he makes us very joyful;

we trust him because he is holy.

22 Yahweh, we pray that you will always faithfully love us,

while we confidently wait for you **to help us**.

34

David wrote this psalm about when he pretended to be insane in front of King Abimelech so that the king would send him away.

1 I will always thank Yahweh;

I will constantly praise him out loud.

2 I will boast about **what** Yahweh **has done for me**.

All of the humble people who hear me will rejoice.

3 Join with me in telling others that Yahweh is great,

and let us together proclaim how glorious he is!

4 I prayed to Yahweh, and he answered me;

he rescued me from everything that I was afraid of.

5 Those who ask him **to help them** will be joyful;

may Yahweh always provide for them.

6 I was suffering, but I called out to Yahweh, and he heard me.

He saved me from all of the things that were troubling me.

7 An angel representing Yahweh guards people who deeply revere Yahweh,

and the angel rescues them **from bad things**.

8 Experience for yourselves how good Yahweh is!

Everyone who trusts in Yahweh will be truly happy!

9 All you people who belong to Yahweh, deeply revere him,

because those who deeply revere him will always have everything that they need.

10 Even young lions sometimes go hungry and have nothing to eat,
but people who trust in Yahweh for help will always have the good things that they need.
11 You who are my students, come and listen to me,
and I will teach you how to deeply revere Yahweh.
12 If any of you want to truly live
and to enjoy a good, long life,
13 then be careful to not say things that are harmful,
and to not tell lies.
14 Stop doing what is evil and instead do what is good;
always strive to live peacefully with others.
15 Yahweh pays attention to people who do what is right,
and he listens when they call to him to help them.
16 But Yahweh opposes people who do what is evil.
He does not allow their descendants to remain on the earth.
17 People who do what is right cry out to Yahweh, and he hears them;
he rescues them from all the things that trouble them.
18 Yahweh is always ready to help people who are very sad,
and he saves people who are deeply discouraged.
19 People who do what is right experience many bad things,
but Yahweh rescues them from all of those bad things.
20 Yahweh protects their whole body;
he does not allow their enemies to break even one of their bones.
21 Wicked people will cause themselves to die because of the evil things that they do,
and Yahweh will punish those who hate righteous people.
22 Yahweh saves those who serve him,
and he will forgive all who trust in him.

35

1 ***A psalm of David.***

Yahweh, be the enemy of my enemies!

Defend me against those who attack me!

2 Protect me like a soldier who has both of his shields,
and come to help me!

3 Take your spear and javelin and confront those who are pursuing me!
Tell me, “I am the one who saves you.”

4 Please defeat and dishonor those who want to kill me,
and make those who plan to harm me become confused and turn back.

5 May an angel from Yahweh chase them away
so that they disappear like chaff in the wind.

6 May their lives be like running on a path that is dark and slippery,
while an angel from Yahweh pursues them!

7 Please do these things to them, because I have not done anything wrong to them,
yet they try to kill me.
It is as though they hide nets and dig pits for me to walk into!

8 So let disaster suddenly surprise each of them!
Let it be as though the nets that they hid catch them instead,
and as though they fall into their own **pits** and die!

9 Then I will rejoice because of **what** Yahweh **has done for me**,
and I will be glad because he has saved me.

10 With my whole being I will say,
“Yahweh, no one is like you!
No one else rescues weak people from those who are stronger,
no one else rescues poor and needy people from those who rob them.”

11 Hostile people tell lies **about me** in court
and accuse me of things that I know nothing about.

12 I was good to them. But instead of being good to me, they are evil to me.
That makes me feel completely alone.

13 Yet for my part, when they were sick, I put on rough cloth to mourn for them;
I went without food as I prayed for them,
bowing my head over my chest.

14 I walked around grieving for them

as I would grieve for a friend or for a brother,
and I bowed down mourning for them as though for my own mother.
15 But when I suffered, they all gathered together and celebrated.
People whom I did not even know gathered to attack me.
They kept slandering me and would not stop.
16 Profane people mocked me for being lame
and ground their teeth at me to show how angry they were.
17 Lord, please do more than just watch what they do!
Rescue me from these people who want to destroy me!
Save me from these people who are as fierce as young lions!
18 Then I will thank you when the great crowd of your people gather together,
and I will praise you in front of all of them.
19 Do not let my enemies who lie about me celebrate because they defeated me,
and do not let those who hate me for no reason wink at each other to show how pleased they are about it.
20 Do not let them succeed, because they do not speak peacefully to anyone;
instead, they make up lies about quiet, peaceable people in the land.
21 They shout loudly to accuse me,
saying, "Yes! Yes! We saw what you did!"
22 Yahweh, you have seen all of this, so please do something about it!
Lord, please help me!
23 Become active and do the right thing for me;
my God and my Lord, defend me!
24 Yahweh my God, because you are righteous, declare that I am innocent,
and do not let my enemies celebrate that they have defeated me.
25 Do not let them think to themselves, "Yes! We got what we wanted!"
Do not let them say to each other, "We have completely destroyed him!"
26 Instead, make all those who celebrate when bad things happen to me
feel totally ashamed and disgraced.
Yes, completely humiliate those who boast that they are greater than me.
27 But let those who want God to show that I am innocent

shout for joy and celebrate!

Let them always say, “Yahweh is great!

He loves to make things go well for the one who serves him.”

28 Then I will tell everyone how righteous you are,

and I will praise you all day long.

36

Note for the worship leader: David, a man who served Yahweh faithfully, wrote this psalm.

1 Wicked people act as though they are obeying a voice from deep within themselves that is urging them to sin.

They have no respect for God at all.

2 Indeed, they are so proud that they refuse

to recognize how wrongly they act

so that they might hate **doing those things**.

3 Everything that they say is wicked and deceptive;

they have stopped acting wisely and **stopped** doing what is right.

4 They plan sinful activities while lying on their beds;

they commit themselves to a bad way of living;

they do not refuse to do evil things.

5 Yahweh, the amount that you faithfully love us is so much that it is as though it fills the heavens.

If we could measure how trustworthy you are, the amount would extend into the clouds.

6 Your way of doing what is right is **as permanent** as the highest mountains;

your way of acting justly is **as vast and mysterious** as the deepest oceans.

Yahweh, you take care of **all living creatures,** both people and animals.

7 God, how precious it is that you faithfully love us!

You protect people just as a bird shelters its young under its wings.

8 You provide for them plenty of food from the abundant supply that you have;

you satisfy them with good things that they enjoy, as if from a never-ending stream.

9 Indeed, you are the one who causes everything to live;
you are the one who makes it possible for us to understand what is true.

10 Please continue to faithfully love those who know you,
and continue to do right for those who sincerely want to do what is right.
11 Do not let arrogant people overcome me,
and do not let wicked people force me to flee.
12 See how the people who do evil have fallen!
God has thrown them down, and they can never get up again.

37

1 ***This is a psalm of David.***

Do not let what wicked people do upset you;
do not wish that you had what people who do evil things have.
2 **Do not worry about them** because they will soon disappear, just as grass dries up **in the sun**
and green plants quickly wither and die.

3 Trust in Yahweh and do what is right;
live in the land **that he has given you**,
and be faithful **to him**.
4 Also, enjoy Yahweh more than anything else;
then he will give you what you desire most.

5 Entrust everything that you plan to do to Yahweh;
trust in him,
and then, for his part, he will do **whatever you need him to do**.
6 He will show everyone as clearly as the light of the noonday sun that you do what is right
and that you are innocent of doing anything wrong.

7 Be calm before Yahweh and wait patiently for him **to act**.
Do not become upset when you see **evil** people succeed
as they do the **wicked** things that they have planned.

8 Stop being angry **about what wicked people do**;
do not want to punish them yourself; that only leads to doing evil.
9 Do not do that because Yahweh will destroy people who do evil,
but as for the people who trust Yahweh to act, they will possess the land.

10 Soon wicked people will disappear.
You will look for them where they used to be, but they will be gone.
11 Humble people, however, will possess the land
and will enjoy living **there** very peacefully and well.

12 Wicked people plan to harm people who do what is right.
They grind their teeth at people who do what is right **to show how much they hate them**.
13 But the Lord scoffs at wicked people,
because he knows that the time when he will judge them is coming.

14 Wicked people draw their swords and string their bows
to kill people who are poor and helpless
and to slaughter people who live honestly.
15 But their swords will pierce their own hearts,
and the Lord will break their bows.

16 It is better to be a person who does what is right and to have only a few possessions
than to have the abundant wealth of many wicked people.
17 **This is so** because Yahweh will make wicked people unable to do what they want to do,
but he will take care of people who do what is right.

18 Each day Yahweh watches over people who do not do wrong things,
and what he gives them will last forever.
19 During times when bad things happen they will not despair;
even when there is a famine, they will still have enough **to eat**.

20 But wicked people will die.

Those who hate Yahweh will be like wildflowers that look beautiful in the meadows;

but then they will disappear **as quickly** as a puff of smoke.

21 Wicked people borrow **money** and never repay **it**,

but people who do what is right are generous and give **freely to others**.

22 Moreover, those whom Yahweh blesses will possess the land,

but he will destroy those whom he has cursed.

23 Yahweh directs a person to live securely,

and he is pleased with how that person lives.

24 Even if something bad happens to that person, he will not completely fail,

because Yahweh takes care of him.

25 I have been young, and now I am old,

but **in all those years** I have never seen Yahweh stop caring for any person who does what is right,

nor have I seen such a person's children **needing to** beg for food.

26 People who do what is right are generous and lend freely **to others** every day,

and their children bless others.

27 Avoid doing evil and do what is right.

If you do that, you **and your descendants** will live in the land forever.

28 Indeed, Yahweh loves it when people do what is just,

and he will never stop caring for those who are faithful to him.

He will protect them forever,

but he will destroy the descendants of wicked people.

29 People who do what is right will possess the land **that Yahweh gives them**

and will live there forever.

30 People who do what is right speak wisely,

and they say what is just.

31 They continually think about the instructions that their God gave to them;

they succeed in living **the way that God wants them to live**.

32 Wicked people observe people who do what is right
and look for ways to kill them.
33 But Yahweh will keep protecting them from what the wicked people want to do to them,
and he will not let a judge **wrongly** condemn the people who do what is right.

34 Patiently rely on Yahweh **to help you** and obey what he commands.
If you do that, he will honor you by giving you the land.
When God destroys the wicked people, you will see it happen.
35 I once saw a wicked and tyrannical person who was becoming powerful, like a large tree that was spreading out its branches over its native soil.
36 But then he passed away! Suddenly, he was gone!
I looked for him, but he was not there.

37 Observe **and imitate** people who are honest and who live rightly,
because people who live peacefully will have a long life.
38 But Yahweh will destroy all people who rebel against him;
he will make the lives of wicked people short.

39 Yahweh saves people who do what is right;
he protects them when bad things are happening.
40 Yahweh helps them and rescues them
from **what** wicked people **want to do to them**.
He saves them because they have trusted in him **to help them**.

38

1 ***This is a psalm of David, to ask God to remember him. Yahweh, please do not correct me angrily;***
no, please do not punish me wrathfully.
2 **I feel as though** you have shot arrows into me,
and that you have struck me with your hand.
3 Because you are so angry with me,

my whole body suffers.
My body is restless
because I have sinned.

4 Indeed, all my sins **are like flood waters that** rise above my head;
they are like a heavy load that is too much for me to bear.
5 Because I have acted foolishly,
I have sores that keep getting worse and stink.
6 My body is twisted and bent over very low.
I go around sad and grieving constantly.
7 This is because there is a fever inside me,
and my whole body is sick.

8 I am exhausted and feel completely broken.
I moan loudly because I feel so distressed.

9 Lord, you know everything that I long for,
and you hear every time that I sigh.
10 My heart beats rapidly and I am very weak.
Even my eyesight is failing me.
11 My friends and the people I love keep away from me because of my disease;
even my own family stays far away from me.
12 Those who want to kill me set traps for me,
and those who want to harm me talk about how to destroy me
and they constantly plot how they will deceive me.
13 But I act like someone who is deaf, and I do not listen **to them**.
I act like someone who cannot speak, and I say nothing **to them**.
14 I have become like a man who cannot hear
and who cannot argue back.
15 **This is** because I wait for you, Yahweh**, to help me**.
You will be the one who will respond, Lord my God.
16 **I know this** because I prayed,

"Do not let my enemies celebrate over me. Do not let them gloat over me if something bad happens to me."

17 Indeed, I feel that something bad will soon happen,
and I am constantly in pain.
18 Certainly, I confess all the wrong things that I have done;
I feel terrible about my sin.
19 But my vigorous enemies are powerful,
and there are many people who hate me for no reason.
20 When I do good things for people, some of them do evil things to me in return.
Those people accuse me **of doing evil things**, even though I am trying to do what is right.

21 Yahweh, please do not leave me!
My God, please stay near me!
22 Come quickly to help me,
Lord, you who save me!

39

This is a note to the worship leader: David wrote this song. Perform in the style of Jeduthun.

1 I thought to myself, "I must be very careful about how I act
so that I do not sin by what I say.
I must keep myself from speaking
while wicked people are near me."
2 So I kept completely silent; I did not say anything, not even anything good,
but my suffering only became worse.
3 I felt very agitated inside me;
the more I pondered, the more agonized I became.
Then finally I spoke and said,

4 "Yahweh, let me know when I will die.
Tell me how many days I have left to live.
Help me to understand how short my life really is.

5 Indeed, you have made my days very few;
the time that I have to live is practically nothing to you.
Truly, every person appears and disappears as quickly as vapor. *Selah*

6 Truly, each person does not do anything more substantial than a shadow would do.
Truly, people become agitated about things that do not matter.
They pile up **wealth**, but they do not know
who will get it **after they die**.

7 So now, Lord, I realize that it is useless for me to expect any person to make my life purposeful.
You are the only one who can do anything worthwhile for me.

8 Please save me from all the ways that I sin against you.
Do not let me be someone whom foolish people ridicule.

9 I kept silent and did not say anything,
because **I knew that** you were the one who caused **me to suffer**.

10 **But now,** please stop punishing me!
As for me, because you have afflicted me, I am about to die.

11 When you correct a person for the wrong things that he has done,
you destroy what he treasures, just as moths destroy clothing.
Truly, every person lives only a very short time. *Selah*

12 Yahweh, please hear me as I pray **to you**
and listen **to me** when I cry out for help.
Do not ignore my tears,
because I am only living before you **on the earth** for a short time,
a temporary resident, just like all of my ancestors.

13 Please leave me alone in order that I may be happy **for awhile**
before I die."

40

A note for the worship leader: David wrote this psalm.

1 I patiently waited for Yahweh **to help me,**

and he was attentive to me
and listened when I called out to him.
2 When bad things were happening to me, it was as though I was in a dangerous pit
that was full of mud and slime
but he rescued me from those terrible things
as though he had lifted me out of the pit and set me onto a solid rock
where I could stand securely.
3 He gave me reason to sing a new song,
praising him, our God.
Many people will see **what he did for me** and will revere him
and will trust in Yahweh.
4 What a good life the person has
who trusts confidently in Yahweh
and does not imitate proud people
who are loyal to what is false.
5 Yahweh my God, you are the one who has done many wonderful things
and made **great** plans for us!
No one compares to you.
If I tried to tell others about all of those wonderful things,
there would be too many for me to mention.

6 It is not the sacrifices and offerings that you have wanted **from me**;
instead, you gave me the ability to hear and obey you.
Burnt offerings and sin offerings are not what you require **to forgive my sins**.
7 So I said, “Yahweh, here I am,
ready to do the things that the scroll of your instruction says about me.”
8 My God, I gladly do what you desire;
I deeply treasure your instruction.

9 Whenever your people gather together in the large congregation,
I tell them about the righteous things **that you do**.

Indeed, Yahweh, certainly you know that I do not stop talking about this.

10 I have not kept to myself the good news that you are righteous;

I have told the large gathering of your people that you are faithful and that you save us.

I have not hidden from them that you faithfully love us and are always trustworthy.

11 Yahweh, you will not stop being merciful to me.

Because you faithfully love me and are always trustworthy,

I know that you will continually protect me.

12 I assure myself of this because so many bad things are happening to me that it seems that I cannot even count them.

the wrong things that I have done are now affecting me badly,

and I cannot see a way to fix them.

It seems that they are more numerous than the hairs on my head,

and I am very discouraged.

13 Yahweh, please rescue me!

Yahweh, please come quickly to help me!

14 May God completely disgrace

all of the people who want to kill me.

May God frustrate the people who want me to suffer

and may he humiliate them.

15 May those who mock me, saying, “Ha, Ha!”

feel horrified because God has so humiliated them.

16 May all those who come to worship you

be very joyful because of you.

May those who love that you save them say continually,

“Yahweh is great!”

17 As for me, I am very poor,

but the Lord cares about me.

You are the one who rescues me;

my God, please do not wait any longer!

41

Note for the worship leader: David wrote this psalm.

1 What a good life those people have who help powerless people!
When bad things happen to them, Yahweh will rescue them.
2 Yahweh will protect them
and people will see that things turn our well for them as they live in the land.
Yahweh, please do not let their enemies do what they want with them.
3 Yahweh will strengthen them when they are sick;
Yahweh, you completely restore them whenever they become ill.
4 As for me, I said, "Yahweh, please be merciful to me and heal me.
I am sick because I have sinned against you."
5 My enemies say hateful things about me;
they say, "We want him to die so that everyone will forget him!"
6 Whenever one of them comes to visit **me**, he says things that mean nothing.
He secretly collects harmful information,
then he goes outside and tells **it to everyone**.
7 Everyone who hates me whispers about me to one another;
they plot how to harm me.
8 **They say about me,** "Something terrible has happened to him,
and he will never get up from where he is lying."
9 Even my closest friend, the one I trusted,
who shared meals with me,
has greatly betrayed me.
10 However, Yahweh, please be merciful to me and make me well,
so that I can do to them what they did to me.
11 When you do this, I will know that you are pleased with me,
when my enemies **will not be able to defeat me and so** cannot rejoice about it.
12 As for me, you have helped me because I live honestly,
and you will allow me to be with you forever.

13 We should all praise Yahweh, the God whom the people of Israel worship!
People should praise him at all times, now and forever!
Yes, let it be so!

Book Two

42

This is a note for the worship leader: One of the Korahites wrote this song.

1 When a wild deer is very thirsty,
it takes short, quick breaths because it wants so badly
to find a brook from which it can drink water.
That is how much I want you, God.
It is as if I am taking short, quick breaths.

2 You are the only true God,
and I desire very greatly to be in your temple again
and worship in your presence.
I desire that so much
that it is as if I am very thirsty.

3 I have been crying continually.
I have been crying so much that I have not been able to eat.
This is because my enemies keep telling me,
"Your God will certainly not help you!"

4 It is appropriate for me to weep to express my great sorrow.
But **to encourage myself,** I should also remember
how I used to go with large groups of people
to celebrate festivals at God's temple.
Because I was one of the worship musicians,
I would lead the people as they walked to the temple.
On the way there,
we all shouted joyfully and praised God.

5 So I certainly should not be so sad and upset!

I can confidently expect God to rescue me!
When he does, I will have the opportunity
to praise him as my savior and
6 my God. But I do feel very sad.
So **even though I am a long distance from your temple, God**
I will remember you from here at Mount Mizar
in the land near Mount Hermon where the Jordan River begins.
7 The waterfalls you created make such a loud sound
that it is as if one deep stream were shouting to another deep stream within the river.
I feel such anguish that it is as if
one wave after another were crashing over me.
8 Yahweh continually loves me faithfully as he promised.
In response, as he inspires me, I continually sing prayers to him.
He is the God who keeps me alive.
9 God is like a huge rock on top of which I am safe.
So I will pray to him,
"Please pay attention to me!
I am living sorrowfully because my enemies are afflicting me!"
10 Those enemies are continually insulting me.
They keep telling me, "Your God will certainly not help you!"
When they insult me like that,
it is as painful as if they were breaking my bones.
11 But I certainly should not be so sad and upset!
I can confidently expect God to rescue me!
When he does, I will have the opportunity
to praise him as my savior and my God.

43

1 Please protect me, God, from the people who are being so cruel to me.
Please consider that I do not deserve that.

2 Rescue me from people who would deceive me and treat me unfairly. **I ask you to do this** because you are the God who protects me,
and yet I feel as if you have abandoned me!

3 I am living sorrowfully because my enemies are afflicting me. Treat me favorably, as if you were smiling at me.
Help me, as you have promised to do for those who are loyal to you.
Guide me so that I can return
to your temple on Mount Zion.

4 **When I do come to Zion,** I will go to your altar **to worship you**.
O God, you make me very joyful! **At your altar,** I will sing praise to you,
the God whom I worship, as I play the harp.

5 So I certainly should not be so sad and upset!
I can confidently expect God to rescue me!
When he does, I will have the opportunity
to praise him as my savior and my God.

44

This is a note for the worship leader: One of the Korahites wrote this song.

1 God, we listened carefully when our ancestors told us
about the great things you did long ago
when the Israelites first came into the land of Canaan.

2 **They told us about** how powerfully you forced the other nations to leave
and established our ancestors securely in their land.
It was as if they had been plants that you put firmly in the ground.
You destroyed the people groups that had lived there
and enabled our ancestors to settle there.

3 Our ancestors did not conquer this land with their own weapons
or by their own power.
Instead, you helped them and defeated their enemies
by your own great power.
You did that because you loved them.

4 You are our real king, O God.

Please enable the people of Israel to defeat their enemies.

5 You enable us to defeat our enemies.

Because you help us, we destroy armies that fight against us.

6 We do not expect to win victories

because of the weapons we have.

7 Instead, you rescue us from our enemies.

You disgrace our opponents **by defeating them**.

8 We regularly celebrate what God has done for us.

We will always praise him. *Selah*

9 But now it appears that you no longer want to help us.

This has embarrassed us.

When our armies march out to fight a battle,

you no longer enable them to win victories.

10 You make us retreat from our enemies.

We must leave behind weapons and possessions,

and they take as many of those as they want.

11 You have allowed our enemies to slaughter us as if we were sheep.

Foreign armies have captured many of our people

and taken them back to their countries as slaves.

12 You did not even receive any money

for allowing others to take your people as their slaves.

You did not become any richer

as a result of that.

13 Because you no longer help us,

the people groups around us insult us.

They express contempt for us

and laugh at us.

14 People in other nations are using us Israelites

as an example of an unfortunate people group.

They are shaking their heads at us

to ridicule us.

15 I am constantly aware of my disgrace.
I feel complete shame
16 because people are speaking so harshly to me.
Those people are my enemies, and they want to harm me.
17 These things have happened to us
even though we have not stopped worshiping you
and we have not disobeyed the solemn agreement that you made with our ancestors.
18 We still love you as our God,
and we have continued to do what you have commanded us to do.
19 But **you have allowed** our enemies to ruin our land and leave it desolate.
You have left us feeling as though we are going to die.
20 If we had stopped worshiping you as our God
and had started worshiping a foreign god,
21 you would surely have known that.
That is because you know even what people secretly think.
22 Because you are not helping us,
our enemies are continuing to kill our people.
They believe they can kill us
as easily as if we were sheep,
which people slaughter easily.
23 Protect us! Do not fail to act, Lord, as if you were asleep!
Defend us! Do not keep treating us as if we were not your people!
24 Please be favorable to us and help us!
Consider how badly our enemies are harming us
and how greatly we are suffering!
25 We ask you to do this because we are helpless,
as if we had fallen down
and were lying on the ground and could not get up.
26 You have promised to love us faithfully because we belong to you.
So please do something to rescue us from our enemies!

45

This is a note for the worship leader: One of the Korahites wrote this song. It is a love song. The tune is "Lilies."

1 There is something wonderful that I feel so strongly about that I must sing about it.

I will sing a song that I have composed in honor of the king.

As I sing, I will express my ideas in an orderly and complete way,

just like a scribe who records quickly and accurately what he hears people say.

2 O King, you are the most handsome man in the world!

You speak very graciously!

So we know that God has always blessed you.

3 Prepare yourself to keep fighting powerfully **for justice**!

You are glorious and majestic when you do that.

4 Go and win victories to establish yourself as a king who is honest,

who does not proudly oppress his people,

and who does what is right.

As you do that, may you find that your skill as a warrior

terrifies anyone who would resist you.

5 Your sharp arrows pierce into the hearts of your enemies.

You defeat the people groups that fight against you.

6 Your Majesty, you will be the king for a very long time.

You decide people's cases fairly as you rule your kingdom.

7 You love it when people do what is right,

and you hate it when people do what is wrong.

That is why God, whom you worship, has made you so happy.

You are happier than all the people around you.

8 Your royal robes smell beautifully of **the spices** myrrh, aloes, and cassia.

From within your palace, which has ivory decorations,

you hear people playing stringed instruments.

That music makes you happy.

9 The honored women of your court include foreign princesses.

Your bride, the queen, is standing at your right side.
Threads of gold fine gold from Ophir
decorate her robe.
10 And as for you, dear bride,
please listen carefully to my advice.
From now on, regard this as your country
and these people as your family.
11 If you do that, the king will love and appreciate you even more.
Bow down in front of him to honor him as your husband and king.
12 Representatives of foreign kingdoms such as the wealthy kingdom of Tyre will bring gifts to you.
The wealthy people of this kingdom will ask you to treat them favorably.
13 This royal princess looked so beautiful in her private room where she had dressed for the wedding!
She had put on a robe that gold threads richly decorated.
14 As she came in procession to where you are, O king,
people could see that her robe also had beautiful designs of colored thread.
Other young women, her bridesmaids,
followed her in that procession.
15 As they came in procession into your palace,
this made everyone very happy.
16 You will be famous not because of your ancestors but because of your descendants.
They will have influence and authority all over the world.
17 By this song, I want to make the people of future generations remember what a great king you are.
Then people will always say good things about you.

46

This is a note for the worship leader: One of the Korahites wrote this song. The tune is "Maidens."

1 God keeps us safe,

as if he were a secure place where we could go if we were in danger.

God strengthens us.

He is always present to help us when we have troubles.

2 So we would not be afraid even if there were an earthquake

that caused huge chunks of mountains to fall deep into the sea.

3 We would not be afraid even if there were a great storm in the ocean

whose surging waves battered the coastline. *Selah*

4 A stream flows down from the mountains into Jerusalem.

Its cool waters refresh the people who live there.

Jerusalem is the location of God's holy temple.

He is greater than all other spirit beings.

5 God is present in Jerusalem in a special way,

so no one destroys it.

God rescues the people of that city,

and it is as if a dark night ends and a bright new day begins.

6 Sometimes foreign armies invade kingdoms and conquer them.

But that does not happen to us, because God powerfully defends us and defeats our enemies.

7 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, helps us.

The God whom we Israelites worship keeps us safe. *Selah*

8 Let me tell you what Yahweh does.

He destroys our enemies.

9 He stops wars all over the world.

It is as if he breaks bows and arrows, destroys spears,

and burns up war wagons.

10 God says, "Calm down and remember that I am God.

The people of nations throughout the earth will honor me."

11 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, helps us.

The God whom we Israelites worship keeps us safe. *Selah*

47

This is a note for the worship leader: One of the Korahites wrote this psalm.

1 People all over the world, clap your hands!
Shout joyfully to praise God!
2 Everyone should revere Yahweh, who is much greater than any other spirit being.
He rules powerfully over the whole world!
3 He enables us to conquer people groups that oppose us.
4 He loved our ancestor Jacob,
and so he chose this land to be our possession.
We are proud of the land he gave us. *Selah*
5 People have acclaimed Yahweh their God as their king
by shouting and blowing ram's horns.
6 Sing songs to praise God our King!
Yes, sing songs to praise him!
7 Do that because God rules the whole world.
Sing a special song about that.
8 God rules over all people groups.
He rules them completely fairly, not the way many human kings do.
9 The rulers of the people groups will assemble
to join those who worship the same God whom Abraham worshiped.
They will do that because the leaders of the world must obey God.
He is the supreme ruler of the world.

48

One of the Korahites wrote this psalm.

1 Yahweh is great, and he deserves to have people praise him greatly
in **Jerusalem**, the city that belongs to him.
That city is high up on the mountain that he chose
as the place where people would worship him.
2 The height of Mount Zion is magnificent.
People from all over the world are happy when they see it.
The city **of Jerusalem,** where Yahweh rules as the great king,

is on the northern ridge of that mountain.

3 God is present **as a defender** in the city's fortifications.
He has shown that he protects the people of the city.

4 Listen to why Yahweh deserves our praise.
Kings joined together and led their armies to attack our city.

5 However, when they saw it,
its secure position and defenses amazed them.
They became so frightened
that they ran away.

6 Their bodies shook because they were so afraid.
They screamed as if they were women who were giving birth.

7 Just as you, Yahweh, can sent a strong east wind
that wrecks even the sturdiest ships at sea,
so you destroyed the armies
that were attacking us.

8 Jerusalem belongs to Yahweh,
the commander of the heavenly armies, who is our God.
We had heard **from our ancestors** that God would always keep the city secure.
Now we who live in the city have seen for ourselves that this is true. *Selah*

9 We went into your temple, God,
and recognized that you faithfully kept your covenant when you protected us.
We acknowledged that you had been just as faithful to us
as you were to our ancestors.

10 People throughout the world praise you as you deserve.
You use your power to make sure that people treat each other right.

11 The people who live in Jerusalem and in other parts of the kingdom of Judah
should celebrate the way you judge people fairly.

12 You Judeans should walk around the walls of the city of Jerusalem.
See how many defensive towers it has!

13 You should observe the strength of the walls and the fortifications
so that you can tell your descendants about them.

14 The people of Judah and Jerusalem should praise Yahweh
because he is our God and he will always be our God.
He will lead us for as long as we live.

49

This is a note for the worship leader: One of the Korahites wrote this psalm.

1 Listen to me, members of people groups
from throughout the world,
2 whether or not you are famous
and whether or not you are rich!
3 I have thought carefully about what I am going to say,
so it will be wise, and it will help you understand things better.
4 There is a popular saying about something that people find difficult to understand.
I have considered it, and I will explain it as I **sing and** play my harp.
5 I do not have to be afraid during difficult times
when wicked people around me try to harm me.
6 These wicked people believe that they will be able to use their money to overcome any difficulty.
They boast about how rich they are.
7 No one can use his money to keep a person from dying.
No, no one can pay God money so that another person will not die.
8 No matter how much money a person has,
it is never enough to keep someone else from dying
9 so that the person will live forever
and never leave this world.
10 Whether people are wise or foolish and brutish, they all die.
Then other people inherit their money.
11 They imagine that the houses they live in will always exist.
They call their properties by their own names
as if they would always have them.
12 Even if someone is great, he does not stay that way.

He still dies, just as animals do.

13 Those who think and act as if they will never die are living in a foolish manner.
Even so, some other people admire them and approve of what they say. *Selah*

14 God has determined that they will die, as easily as sheep die,
and go to the place where dead people are.
They will remain there, as if death were a shepherd keeping them in a pen.
One day God will make righteous people rule over wicked people.
Wicked people will no longer live in comfortable homes.
Instead, their bodies will decay in their graves.

15 But God will take me to himself.
In that way, he will rescue me from the place where dead people are. *Selah*

16 Do not let it trouble you when a person becomes rich
and has many valuable possessions.

17 After all, when that person dies,
he will take nothing with him **to the place where dead people are**.
He will not be able to bring his money there with him.

18 While a rich person is alive, he says to himself that he is successful.
(People tend to praise anyone who is successful.)

19 Nevertheless, he will die and go to where his dead ancestors are.
All of them will remain in that dark place forever.

20 If someone is great but does not understand these things,
he will die, just as animals do.

50

1 ***A Levite from the clan of Asaph wrote this song.***

Yahweh is the only true God.
He has decreed that people from all over the world
should come to him.

2 Mount Zion is as wonderful as a place can be **because God's temple is there**.
God's presence there is like a light that shines brightly.

3 Our God is approaching us **to judge us**.

He will now tell us **what we have done right and what we have done wrong**.

He is coming very powerfully, as he did at Mount Sinai,
when there was a great thunderstorm and a burning fire on the mountain as he approached it.

4 He calls upon the sky and the land **to serve as witnesses of his covenant with the Israelites**.

This demonstrates that he will judge them fairly **according to that covenant**.

5 He says, "Summon those who worship me faithfully,
those who made a covenant with me
that involved offering sacrifices to me."

6 The sky displays the character of God so clearly,
it is as though it is saying,
"God is righteous, and he is the supreme judge." *Selah*

7 God says, "You Israelite people who belong to me, listen as I speak to you.
I am the God whom you worship. I am going to tell you what you have done right and what you have done wrong.

8 You continually burn animals completely on the temple altar as sacrifices to me,
so I have no complaint that you have failed to offer sacrifices to me.

9 However, I do not really need the bulls from your herds
or the goats from your pens **that you sacrifice to me**.

10 I do not need them, because all of the animals that live in the forests belong to me.
All of the cattle everywhere on earth also belong to me.

11 I own all the birds that live in the mountains.
All the little creatures that move around in the fields also belong to me.

12 Because everything in the world belongs to me,
if I were hungry, I would not tell you
so that you would bring me some food to eat.

13 When you sacrifice bulls to me, I do not eat their flesh,
and when you offer goats to me, I do not drink their blood.

14 I want you to offer sacrifices to me, your God,

because you have promised to do that to thank me for helping you.
I am the God who is greater than all other spirit beings.
15 So pray to me when you are in trouble.
If you do that, I will rescue you,
and then you will honor me **publicly by offering a sacrifice**."
16 But God says to wicked people,
"You should not be reciting my commandments
or talking about the covenant that I made with you!
17 You should not do that, because you hate it when I correct you,
and when I tell you to do something, you refuse to obey me.
18 When you see someone stealing,
you decide that it is acceptable for him to steal.
When you learn that people are having sexual relations with people other than their spouses,
you do the same thing.
19 You do not restrain yourselves from saying wicked things,
and you make up things to say to deceive people.
20 You consistently say bad things about members of your own family,
even about your closest relatives.
21 You do all those things,
and I have not said anything to you about them,
so you think that I do not care about them any more than you do.
But now I am going to show you **all the wicked things you have done**,
and I am going to judge and punish you for doing them.
22 Many of you have been ignoring me.
Pay attention to what I am saying now!
If you do not, I will destroy you.
No one will be able to rescue you.
23 When people publicly offer sacrifices to thank me for helping them,
that honors me greatly.
If people live as I want people to live,

I will rescue them when they are in trouble.”

51

This is a note for the worship leader: King David wrote this song after the prophet Nathan came and rebuked him for having sexual relations with another man’s wife, Bathsheba.

1 Oh God, since you promised to faithfully love me,
please act mercifully toward me.
You gently love people in many ways,
so please forgive me for disobeying you so badly.

2 Remove my sin completely, as if it were dirt that you were washing off me
to make me clean.

3 I ask this because I know that I have disobeyed you in many ways.
I am continually aware of that.

4 What grieves me most is how I have sinned against you.
I have done things that you consider to be very wrong.
So when you declare that I am guilty, you are right.
When you judge me, you are completely fair.

5 Indeed, I have been a sinner from birth.
In fact, I have been a sinner since my mother conceived me.

6 I know that you want me to have honest intentions.
You help me understand very well how to act wisely.

7 Make me acceptable to you again,
as if you were using hyssop to sprinkle water on me to purify me.
Remove my sin as if it were dirt that you were washing off me.
Then I will be completely pure, like snow that has just fallen.

8 Please tell me **that you have forgiven me**.
That would make me very happy.
My guilt feels like a heavy weight on me,
but may I rejoice **in your forgiveness**.

9 Please forgive all the wrong things I have done
so that it will be as if I never did them.

10 O God, please make me want to do only things that please you.
Help me to be loyal to you consistently.
11 Please allow me to come into your presence.
Please do not make your Holy Spirit leave me.
12 Please save me **from the guilt and punishment of my sin**.
That will make me very happy again.
Please make me eager to obey you
so that I do not sin again.
13 Please make me so obedient that I can even teach people who are doing wrong things
how you want them to live instead.
That way people who have been disobeying you
will start obeying you again.
14 God, I admit that I deserve to die because I murdered someone,
but please rescue me from that punishment.
You can save me **from the guilt and punishment of my sin** because you are God.
When you do that, I will sing joyfully about how good you are.
15 Lord, **please do these things so that** I will have a reason to speak publicly
and say things to praise you.
16 If you had wanted me to offer a sacrifice **because of the sin I committed**,
I would certainly have done that.
But you do not accept burnt offerings
from people who bring them to try to make things right with you after committing murder.
17 What you really want is for people to pray to you in genuine humility **and ask for forgiveness**.
When a person is very sorrowful for his sin, you, God, do not reject him.
18 Please regard us Israelites favorably and help us.
Protect us from our enemies.
19 Then people will offer sacrifices to you for the right reasons.
They will bring animals that they will burn completely as offerings to you.

They will completely burn up young bulls on your altar.

You will gladly accept these sacrifices.

52

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song when Doeg the Edomite went to King Saul and told him, "David went to Ahimelech's house."

1 Doeg, you are boasting as if you were a great warrior because you killed so many people,

but you are wrong to boast, because they were helpless.

God always protects me because he is kind to me.

2 You say things that you know will cause great harm to other people.

It is as if your tongue is a sharp knife slashing people.

People did something innocently,

but you reported it in such a way that they seemed to be guilty.

3 You like to do what is wrong more than you like to do what is right.

You like to tell lies more than you like to tell the truth. *Selah*

4 You like to say anything that will cause harm to people.

What you say causes innocent people to suffer.

5 But God will destroy you permanently, just as you have destroyed others.

You may feel safe in your home, but God will take you from there

and remove you from this world in which people are alive. *Selah*

6 When good people see that, they will respect God for being just.

They will laugh at you.

7 They will say, "Look what happened to this man who did not trust God to protect him.

He thought that because he had a lot of money, he could avoid trouble.

He believed that harming other people would make him powerful."

8 But I am safe, just like the olive trees that the priests plant and care for in the courtyard of the place where we worship God.

I know that God will always be kind to me.

9 I am confident that you, God, are going to do what I have described,

and I will always praise you for that.

You have demonstrated to the people who are faithful to you that you are good.

So I will wait patiently for you to act according to your good character.

53

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song to the tune of "Weakness."

1 People who do not want to obey God tell themselves that God does not exist.

People like that are bad. They do terrible things.

Every one of them acts wickedly.

2 God looks down from heaven at the people on the earth.

He wants to find out whether any of them are wise and want to know him.

3 But they have all chosen to disobey God.

They have all become bad people.

Every single one of them acts wickedly.

4 They take away people's possessions until they have nothing left.

They do that as easily as they would eat a loaf of bread.

The people who do such bad things ought to realize **that God is going to punish them**.

But they do not worship God.

5 An army came and attacked the Israelites.

Its soldiers did not have to be afraid that the Israelites would defeat them.

But God made them lose in battle so badly that the survivors were not even able to bury the dead soldiers.

This made them very afraid.

God regarded this army as insignificant **compared with his great power**.

He helped the Israelites**, and so they** were able to humiliate those soldiers **by defeating them**.

6 I wish that God, whose sanctuary is on Mount Zion, would rescue the Israelite people!

When God makes his people prosperous again, the Israelites, those descendants of Jacob, will be very happy.

54

This is a note for the worship leader: Musicians playing stringed instruments should accompany this song. David wrote this song when the people of the region of Ziph went to Saul and told him that David was hiding in their area.

1 God, please use your power to save me **from my enemies**!

If you do that, people will realize that I have not done anything wrong.

2 God, please listen to what I say

as I pray to you.

3 I am praying for your help because even my fellow Judeans are treacherously acting against me.

These are violent men, and they want to kill me.

They do not respect you. *Selah*

4 But God is helping me.

The Lord is helping the people who are protecting me so that I stay alive.

5 My enemies want to do harmful things to me,

but God will cause those things to happen to them instead.

Because you faithfully do what you promise,

destroy them **so that they do not kill me**!

6 I promise that **when you rescue me,** I will publicly offer a sacrifice to honor you.

I will praise you, Yahweh, for how good you are.

7 I will be able to do this because he rescues me from all my troubles

and, as a result, I see that he has defeated my enemies.

55

This is a note for the worship leader: Musicians playing stringed instruments should accompany this song. David wrote this song.

1 God, please listen to me as I pray to you.

Please do not ignore me as I am pleading with you.

2 Please pay attention to me and do what I ask.

The things I am praying about are agitating me and making me moan **in distress**.

3 This is because my enemies are saying things **to threaten me**.

Wicked people are attacking me.

They are causing me to have great troubles.

Because they are so hostile to me, they never stop trying to harm me.

4 My heart is pounding inside me because I am so upset.

I strongly feel many fears because I know that my enemies are trying to kill me.

5 I am shaking because I am so afraid.

The only thing I feel is fear.

6 I have been thinking, "How good it would be if I had wings like a dove!

I would fly away and find a place to rest.

7 If I could, I would go far away

and stay in a desolate area. *Selah*

8 I would quickly find a safe place

where my enemies could not harm me in the way that a powerful storm causes damage."

9 Lord, please destroy my enemies!

Make them disagree about what to do **so that they cannot make successful plans against me**.

I ask this because I know that they are fighting with people in the city and hurting them.

10 The fighting is constant, and the people in the city cannot get away from it.

Bad people are causing much trouble right in the middle of the city.

11 These bad people harm others right in the middle of the city.

Dishonest people continually deceive and cheat others in the marketplace.

12 If it were an enemy who was saying bad things about me,

I could endure it.

If it were someone who hated me who was powerfully opposing me,

I could hide from him.

13 But the person who is doing those things to me is someone I treated not as a subject but as an equal.

I knew him well, and we were together often.

14 We used to talk together in a wonderful way.

We also used to go to the temple courtyard together **to worship God** with the other Israelites who gathered there.

15 My enemies are so wicked in their inner beings that it is as if wickedness lives in their homes **and influences what they do**.

So I hope that bad things happen to them that destroy them!

I wish that **the earth would open up under them so that**

they would go down alive to the place where dead people are.

16 But I will ask Yahweh, my God, to help me,

and he will rescue me.

17 I will continually pray to him,

whether I can express my concerns in words

or whether I am only able to moan **as a plea to him**.

He will answer my prayer by helping me.

18 My enemies are coming with many soldiers to fight against me,

but God will keep me safe and save my life when we fight a battle.

19 My enemies have no difficulties in life,

so they do not respect God. *Selah*

But God, who has ruled forever,

will answer my prayer and punish them as they deserve.

20 The man I knew well is attacking me even though I was his friend.

He should have remained loyal to me, but he has not.

21 What he said was as easy to believe as butter is easy to swallow,

but secretly he hated me.

The words he spoke were as soothing as olive oil,

but all along he intended to use words to hurt people as sharp swords do.

22 Depend on Yahweh to help you when you are in trouble, and he will take care of you.

He will never allow anyone to destroy people who are righteous.

23 God, you will cause people who deceive and kill others

to die before they have lived half as long as most people do.

But as for me, I will trust you **to protect me**.

56

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song when the Philistines made him their prisoner in the city of Gath. The tune is "A Faraway Silent Dove."

1 O God, men are attacking me, so please help me!

They keep fighting me and making me suffer.

2 Many proud enemies are fighting against me,

so there is continually someone attacking me.

3 But whenever I am afraid,

I trust you **to help me**.

4 I praise you, God, because you have promised **to take care of me**.

I trust you to do that, so I am not afraid.

I know that mere humans will not be able to harm me!

5 My enemies are continually trying to interfere in my activities. They keep planning ways to harm me.

6 Together they secretly watch where I am going

because they are looking for an opportunity to kill me.

7 They should not be able to avoid punishment for the wicked things they are doing.

O God, in your anger, please defeat all of our foreign enemies!

8 You have watched me carefully as I have wandered to this place.

Please stay close to me as I have sad experiences here.

I know that you have watched me closely as I have had these experiences.

9 When I cry to God for help, my enemies will stop attacking me.

I know that will happen because God favors me.

10 I praise you, Yahweh my God,

because you have promised **to take care of me**.

11 I trust you to do that, so I am not afraid.

I know that mere humans will not be able to harm me!

12 God, I have vowed **that I will thank you publicly when you help me**,

so I will offer a sacrifice to thank you.

13 I will be able to do that because you will have rescued me.

No one will have killed me.

Because you protect me, I will be able to live in your presence
here in this world where people are alive.

57

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song when he fled into a cave to escape from Saul. The tune is "Do Not Destroy."

1 O God, please help me!
I ask you to do that because I depend on you to protect me.
I pray that you will protect me just as a mother bird protects her chicks under her wings.
I ask you to do that until the troubles I am having are over.

2 I am crying **for help** to God, who is greater than all other spirit beings.
God will complete what he has begun to do for me.

3 May he act from where he is in heaven to rescue me.
Someone is trying to harm me; may God prevent him from doing that. *Selah*
God is kind and loyal to the people who trust him,
so may he help me.

4 Men who are as dangerous as lions are all around me.
I have no safe place to sleep far away from those men who are trying to kill me.
They say things about me that make other people want to harm me.

5 May you have the most glory, God,
of anyone in heaven or on earth!

6 My enemies are trying to capture me, as if they had set out a net to trap me.
This has distressed me greatly.
Yes, they are trying to capture me, as if they had dug a deep pit along the path where I walk, hoping that I would fall into it.
But I believe that God will use what they are doing against them, as if they had fallen into that pit themselves. *Selah*

7 God, I trust you completely.
So **instead of worrying,** I will sing praises to you.

8 I will do that enthusiastically.

I will begin the day by praising you as I play my harp and lyre.

9 I will sing songs to praise you, Lord,

so that people of other nations can find out about you.

10 You deserve this praise because your kindness and loyalty are much greater than anything on earth,

just as the clouds in the sky are much higher than anything on earth.

11 May you have the most glory, God, of anyone in heaven or on earth!

58

Here is a note to the worship leader: The tune is "Do Not Destroy." David wrote this song.

1 You **judges** should not think that you can ensure justice if you do not speak out **to condemn wickedness**.

You are not judging cases fairly, and that shows that you are acting only as humans**, not as God's representatives**.

2 In fact, you keep thinking about doing things that are wrong.

The decisions that you make encourage people to commit violent crimes.

3 Wicked people do wrong things and tell lies

from the time when they are born.

4 Wicked people harm other people just as poisonous snakes harm people.

They do not pay attention to God's commandments, as if they were cobras that refused to listen

5 and so did not respond to the music that snake charmers were playing.

Even the most skillful charmer could not get them to respond to music.

6 Yahweh my God, wicked people are as dangerous as young lions,

but destroy them as if you were breaking the large teeth of such lions.

7 Make them disappear like water that flows away.

When they try to harm people as if they were shooting arrows at them,

keep them from hurting those people, as if those arrows had no heads!

8 May they be like a snail that dissolves as it moves along.

May they be like a baby that never lives on earth because it dies before its mother gives birth to it.

9 God will punish and destroy them as powerfully as if a whirlwind were carrying
them away.
He will do that more quickly than thorns can catch fire and heat a pot, even if
the thorns are dry, not fresh.
10 Righteous people will celebrate when they see God punish wicked people.
It will be as if wicked people were an army that God destroyed
and righteous people were walking triumphantly through the battlefield
afterwards.
11 Then people will say, "It is true that there is a reward for righteous people!
It is true that God judges fairly the people who live on the earth!"

59

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song when Saul sent men to watch his house so that they could kill him *when he left it****. The tune is "Do Not Destroy."***

1 My God, please rescue me from my enemies!
Protect me from those who want to attack me!
2 Rescue me from wicked men
who are trying to kill me!
3 Look! They are hiding and waiting for a chance to kill me!
Fierce men have gathered to harm me.
Yahweh, they are doing that even though I have not done anything that is
wrong!
4 I have not committed any sin, but they are hurrying to get ready to attack me.
Please consider my situation and come quickly to help me.
5 Yahweh, you are the God who commands the heavenly armies.
You are the God whom we Israelites worship.
So I ask you to take action and punish all the people who do not honor you.
Do not act mercifully toward those wicked people who have acted
treacherously toward me. *Selah*
6 They are like wild dogs that come out in **the cool of** the evening
and growl as they roam around this city **looking for scraps of food**.
7 They make violent threats so loudly that it is as if they are belching.

They think, “No one who hears us **will stop us**!”

8 But you mock them, Yahweh.

You scoff at people who do not honor you.

9 Because you, God, are the one who protects me and makes me strong,

I will depend on you.

10 You, God, are faithfully loving to me, and you will come to help me.

You will defeat my enemies so that I can look triumphantly at them.

11 But do not kill them **right away**.

Otherwise, the Israelite people might forget how you punished them.

Instead, use your power to make them wander around helplessly,

and then destroy them.

Lord, you are like a shield that protects us.

12 The things that they say are sinful.

They curse people falsely.

May their pride be like a trap that catches them

and keeps them from doing what they are planning.

13 Become angry with them and destroy them so that they do not exist anymore.

That way people will know that you, God, rule over the Israelite people and the entire world. *Selah*

14 They are like wild dogs that come out in **the cool of** the evening

and growl as they roam around this city **looking for scraps of food**.

15 They roam around searching for food.

If they do not get enough to eat, they keep roaming around all night.

16 But as for me, I will sing each morning about how powerful you are.

I will sing joyfully about how faithfully loving you are to me.

I will sing about how you protect me when I am in danger.

17 I will praise you, who enables me to be strong,

because you, God, protect me and faithfully love me as you promised.

60

This is a note for the worship leader: The tune is "The Lily." David wrote this song when he was leading the Israelite army to fight against Aramean armies from Naharaim and Zobah and his general Joab had to leave and fight the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, where he killed 12,000 of their soldiers. David wanted to testify to the Israelite people so that they would learn from this song ***that they should depend on God to help them.***

1 God, you have stopped helping us Israelites!

Because you have become angry with us, our enemies have been able to break through our ranks.

Please enable us to fight victoriously again!

2 It is as if you have caused a great earthquake that has split open the ground.

Our army is struggling, but please make it strong again.

3 You have caused us Israelites to experience great difficulties.

It is as if you have made us drink strong wine that is making us fall down as if we were drunk.

4 But you have raised a battle flag for those who honor you.

They can rally around it when their enemies attack them. *Selah*

5 That way you will rescue the people whom you love.

Please answer my prayer and use your power to save us.

6 God is holy **and does not lie**, and he has said,

"I delight in the territory that I have measured and divided up for you Israelites to live in.

That territory includes land on the east side of the Jordan River, where the Valley of Succoth is,

and land on the west side of the Jordan River, where Shechem is.

7 I own the region of Gilead **east of the Jordan River**,

and I own the territory of Manasseh **west of the Jordan River**.

The mighty soldiers of the tribe of Ephraim **who fight to protect Israel** are like my helmet,

and I have given Israel a ruler from the tribe of Judah.

8 The Moabites are my servants, like slaves who wash my feet.

I own the land of Edom; it is as if I have thrown my sandal onto it to show that it belongs to me.

And you Philistines might shout your battle cry against me, but I will defeat you."

9 But I still need someone to lead my army to the land of Edom

and conquer their capital city that has strong walls around it.

10 It seems that you, God, have stopped helping us Israelites.

It seems that you do not enable our armies to defeat our enemies when they march out to fight them.

11 Any help that human beings could give us would not be at all sufficient.

So we need you to help us to defeat our enemies.

12 If you, God, help us defeat our enemies,

then we will be able to fight very valiantly.

61

This is a note for the worship leader: A musician playing a stringed instrument should accompany this song. David wrote this song.

1 O God, I am calling to you for help.

Please do what I ask.

2 I am far from home, and I feel sad, so I am calling out to you for help.

Please keep me safe, as if you had put me on top of a high rock.

3 You protect me.

You are like a strong tower into which I can go so that my enemies cannot harm me.

4 I wish I could always be a guest in your home!

Keep me as safe as a baby bird is under its mother's wings. *Selah*

5 God, you know that I have solemnly promised to offer sacrifices to acknowledge you, so please help me.

You have given me the blessings that belong to people who honor you.

6 Please allow me, the king of Israel, to live and rule for many years.

Please allow my descendants to rule also.

7 May I reign for a long time as you watch over me.

You are faithful, and you keep your promises, so please protect me.

8 If you do that, I will always sing songs to praise you,

and each day I will offer the sacrifices that I promised to give you.

62

This is a note for the worship leader: Perform in the style of Jeduthun. David wrote this psalm.

1 God is the one who saves me from my enemies,
and I am waiting quietly for him to do that.

2 He is the only one who can save me.
He protects me as if he were a rock I could climb onto in order to be safe.
No one would harm me at all.

3 My enemies are threatening me,
but they will not be able to keep doing that.
God will destroy all of them, just as a leaning wall falls down
and just as people can push a fence onto the ground.

4 My enemies are plotting together to do one thing.
They want to remove me from my important position.
They enjoy telling lies.
They say things to bless people,
but in their inner beings, they are cursing those people. *Selah*

5 Because I am expecting God to help me,
I will wait quietly for him alone to do that.

6 He is the only one who can save me.
He protects me as if he were a rock I could climb onto in order to be safe.
No one would harm me.

7 God is the one who saves me and honors me.
God is like a huge rock to which I can go to be safe.
He makes me strong.

8 You Israelite people should always trust in God.
Pray earnestly to him in his presence.
He is the one who keeps us safe. *Selah*

9 Certainly, ordinary people lack the power to help,
and important people are not as powerful as they seem.

If you put them all on a scale,
it would be as if they weighed less than air.

10 It is foolish to expect to get rich by cheating other people or by stealing from them.
If you become wealthy, do not rely on your money.

11 God has said very reliably
that he is the one who truly has power.

12 God is also the one who always keeps his promises.
He punishes people who do wrong things but rewards people who do good things.

63

David wrote this song when he was in the desolate area that belongs to the tribe of Judah.

1 God, you are the God whom I worship.
I greatly desire to be with you.
It is as if my body aches for you,
just as a person in a dry, hot wilderness greatly desires water.

2 I have worshiped you in your sanctuary
and recognized how powerful and glorious you are.

3 You are always kind to me, as you promised in your covenant.
This is worth more to me than even being alive,
so I will always praise you.

4 I will praise you for as long as I am alive.
I will lift up my hands and pray to you.

5 You satisfy me as if I had just eaten a delicious banquet of rich foods.
I will praise you very joyfully.

6 Sometimes I think about you when I am lying in bed.
When that happens, I reflect during the night on how wonderful you are.

7 **I realize that you are wonderful** because you have always helped me.
I sing to you joyfully because I am aware that you protect me
just as a mother bird protects her chicks under her wings.

8 I remain completely loyal to you,
and you protect me by your power.
9 Some people are trying to kill me,
but they will die and go to the place where dead people are.
10 They may die in a battle,
and then wild dogs will eat their corpses.
11 But I, the king **of Israel**, will rejoice in what God has done for me.
All those who swear oaths in the name of God will praise him
because he will have stopped people from saying things that are not true.

64

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song.

1 God, please listen to me as I tell you about what worries me.
I am afraid of my enemies; please save me from them.
2 Protect me from what wicked men are planning to do to me.
Protect me from that group of men who do evil things.
3 The hostile things they say are like sharp swords;
their cruel words are like arrows.
4 They are not afraid of anyone.
They falsely accuse people who have done nothing wrong. They are like a person who suddenly jumps up from a hiding place
and shoots an arrow at someone.
5 They encourage each other to do the evil things they are planning.
They boast about how they have deceived people.
They say, “No one will realize what we are doing!”
6 They carefully plan the wicked things they want to do.
They brag, “We have planned this out perfectly!”
It is very difficult to know what people are thinking privately.
7 But God will suddenly judge and punish them,
as if he were shooting an arrow at them and wounding them.
8 The deceitful things they say will get them into trouble.
Everyone who sees what happens to them will stay away from them.

9 People will think about how God has punished them,
and they will tell others about it.
As a result, people will not dare to be wicked.
10 People who do what is right will be very happy that Yahweh has punished those wicked people.
They will trust Yahweh to protect them.
Yes, those who really want to do good things will be glad.

65

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song.

1 God, when you come to your sanctuary on Mount Zion,
you will find that we have been waiting quietly to praise you
and to do what we promised we would do to honor you.
2 Because you help people when they pray,
people everywhere will pray to you.
3 When we feel very badly because we have done wrong things,
you forgive our sins and make it as if we had not committed them.
4 When you invite people to come and worship you in your sanctuary,
that makes them very happy!
When we come to your sanctuary,
we realize how good and holy you are,
and that satisfies us completely.
5 When we pray to you, you do good and powerful things to help us.
You are the God who saves us.
Even people who live in very remote places on the earth,
on the other side of the oceans, trust in you.
6 You are so strong, you were able to use your power
to set the mountains in their places.
7 When there is a storm at sea, you can calm it
and stop its waves from crashing on the shore.
In the same way, you can keep nations from causing trouble.
8 People who live in very remote places on the earth

deeply respect you because of the miracles that you perform.
People who live all over the world celebrate what you do.

9 You send rain to make the soil fertile
so that it will produce good crops.
It is as if you bring water to the fields in a stream.
That is how you prepare the earth
to produce abundant crops.

10 You send rain on the plowed fields,
and you fill their furrows with water.
You soften the hard clods of soil with showers,
and you help young plants to grow in the fields.

11 When harvest time comes, the fields are glorious with crops,
as if you had put a golden crown on them.
You provide food for people in great abundance.

12 There is plenty of food for sheep and goats to eat in the pastures where they graze.
So many crops grow on the hills that it is as if the hills were celebrating.

13 Flocks of sheep and goats cover the meadows like a garment,
and there is so much grain in the valleys that the ground is not visible.
It is as if the meadows and valleys are singing and shouting joyfully.

66

1 ***This is a note for the worship leader: This is a song, a psalm.***
Everyone on earth should shout joyfully to praise God!

2 They should sing songs that tell how glorious God is
and how much he deserves praise for being glorious.

3 Everyone should tell God, "You do such amazing things!
You are so powerful
that your enemies come and bow down fearfully in front of you.

4 Everyone on earth should worship you
and sing to praise you
for your excellent character." *Selah*

5 Come and consider what God has done!

Think about the amazing things that he has done among people.

6 He made a dry path through the Sea of Reeds

so that our ancestors could walk right through it.

They also walked across the Jordan River **when he stopped it from flowing**.

After they crossed, they celebrated what God had done,

and we should still celebrate that today.

7 He is so powerful that he rules forever.

He observes what all the people groups do,

so anyone who considers rebelling against him

should not think that he will be able to do that. *Selah*

8 People from every nation, praise our God!

Praise him loudly so that others will hear you as you praise him.

9 He has kept us alive,

and he has not allowed anyone to destroy us.

10 God, you have allowed us to experience great difficulties **in order to make us pure**,

just as people put silver in a hot fire so they can purify it.

11 It is as if you allowed someone to catch us in a trap

or made us carry a load that was almost too heavy for us.

12 It is as if you allowed our enemies to trample on us.

We experienced troubles that were like walking through fires and floods.

But now you have brought us to a place where we are safe and have plenty of food.

13 God, I have come to your temple bringing offerings for the priests to burn completely on the altar.

I am doing what I promised to do for you.

14 When I was experiencing great trouble,

I said that I would bring these offerings to you **if you rescued me**.

15 So I have brought fat sheep to burn on the altar,

and I have also brought bulls and goats.

When they are burning, you will enjoy the smell of the smoke. *Selah*

16 All you people who deeply respect God, come and listen
as I tell you what he has done for me.
17 I called out to him to help me,
and I praised him as I was praying to him.
18 If I had secretly intended to commit sins,
the Lord would not have done what I asked.
19 **But I did not do that,**
so God has done what I asked.
20 I praise God
because he did what I asked him to do.
He has continued to be kind to me, as he promised.

67

This is a note for the worship leader: This is a song, a psalm. Musicians playing stringed instruments should accompany this song.

1 May God always be kind to us and bless us.
May he consider us favorably. *Selah*
2 God, please do that so that all of the people in the world will know
how you want them to live and that you are the one who saves them.
3 May all the people in the world praise you, God!
4 You judge those nations fairly and show them what they should do.
So may they praise you loudly and joyfully! *Selah*
5 May all the people in the world praise you, God!
6 Good crops have grown on our land.
May the God whom we Israelites worship continue to give us good harvests.
7 May God bless us,
and may that cause people throughout the world to respect him greatly.

68

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this psalm. It is a song.

1 God, take action and chase away your enemies!
Make those who hate you run away from you.

2 Chase your enemies away just as wind blows smoke away.
Make bad people go away, God, just as wax melts when it is near a fire.
3 But make good people happy.
May they rejoice when they are in your presence;
may they be very joyful.
4 Sing praise to God!
Sing a song for him who even cares for desolate regions.
His name is Yahweh;
be glad when you are in his presence.
5 God, who is present in his sanctuary,
is like a father to those who are orphans,
and he protects widows.
6 He provides families for those who have no one to live with.
He frees prisoners and enables them to be successful.
But those who rebel against him will not be successful.
It will be as if they live in a place where it is very hard to grow crops.
7 God, you led your people out of Egypt,
and then you marched with them through the desert. *Selah*
8 After you did that, the earth shook at Mount Sinai when you appeared to your people.
Rain poured down from the sky, and your people worshiped you.
9 You caused much rain to fall there in the wilderness,
and so you enabled good crops to grow again on that land that you gave to us Israelites.
10 Your people built homes there.
You were kind to poor people and provided food for them.
11-12 Kings led their armies to fight against the Israelites,
but God defeated them and they ran away.
The Lord declared victory over them,
and a great crowd of Israelite women sang and danced to celebrate.
The men who fought against these enemies captured many valuable possessions

and brought them back to the women who were at home.

13 Some men had to take care of the sheep **instead of fighting**,

but the soldiers captured enough valuable possessions to give them some as well.

They received treasures such as a dove statue with silver wings and feathers shimmering with fine gold.

14 Shaddai defeated the enemy kings and their armies

by making it snow on Mount Zalmon!

15 Mount Bashan is a very high mountain.

It has many peaks.

16 Because it is such a great mountain, if it could think,

it might think that God should have chosen it as the place for his sanctuary.

But Yahweh chose Mount Zion instead, and he will always be present there.

17 God is so powerful that it is as if he has thousands and thousands of chariots.

In fact, it is as if he has ten thousands and ten thousands of them!

The same God who appeared to the Israelites on Mount Sinai

is now present in his sanctuary on Mount Zion.

18 **After he defeated his enemies,** he went up to the sacred mountain where his sanctuary is.

He led many captured prisoners in a victory procession.

He received gifts from the enemies whom he had defeated.

He even received gifts from those who had rebelled against him.

Now Yahweh, our God, will always be present in his sanctuary.

19 Praise the Lord, who helps us every day as if he were carrying a heavy load for us.

He is the God who saves us. *Selah*

20 Our God is the God who saves us;

Yahweh our Lord is the one who rescues us from dying.

21 But God will completely destroy his enemies.

If anyone continues to behave sinfully, God will destroy that person.

22 The Lord said, “Even if my enemies try to climb a high mountain to be safe,

or even if they try to hide at the bottom of the ocean, I will bring them back
23 so that you can trample on their heads.
Your dogs will lick up the blood that comes out of their heads."
24 And now you are parading triumphantly into your sanctuary, God.
You are our king, and you are leading a great crowd the way a king does.
25 There are singers at the front of the parade.
Musicians playing stringed instruments are at the back of the parade.
In the middle there are girls playing tambourines.
26 Praise God, you who have gathered together!
Praise Yahweh, you descendants of Israel!
27 People from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe, are marching first.
Leaders and many other people from the tribe of Judah come next.
There are even leaders from the **far northern** tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali in the parade.
28 Our God has made our Israelite tribes strong.
God, continue to help us with your power as you helped us in the past.
29 Since you have now established your sanctuary on a mountain above Jerusalem,
kings will send tribute to you there.
30 Show the king of Egypt that even though he has a powerful army, he cannot defeat you.
Many kings who are strong like bulls may gather together.
They may form armies from their subject nations, which are like bulls' calves,
but they will not be able to defeat you either.
Instead, they will come submissively and pay you tribute in silver.
Some nations are eager to fight wars; make their armies run away!
31 Then envoys will come from Egypt **bringing gifts to you**.
The ruler of Cush will hasten to send tribute to God.
32 People of nations throughout the world, sing praise to God!
He is the Lord *Selah*
33 who dwells above the sky that he created long ago.

When you hear thunder, it is as if he is shouting with his very powerful voice.

34 Proclaim how powerful God is!

He is the king who reigns over Israel

as he rules powerfully from the sky.

35 God, you are in your sanctuary, and you are very powerful.

This is the God whom we Israelite people worship.

He makes us very strong. Praise God!

69

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this song. The tune is "Lilies."

1 Please rescue me, God!

I am in great danger, as if I were just about to drown in a flood.

2 It is as if I am sinking in deep mud where there is no solid ground for me to stand on.

It is as if I am in deep water and a flood is swirling around me.

3 I am tired and my throat is dry

because I have been calling to you for help for so long.

I have been looking for so long for you to come and help me

that I have worn out my eyes.

4 There are people who hate me for no reason.

There are so many of these people, it is as if there are more of them than there are hairs on my head!

The enemies who want to harm me are powerful,

and they are telling lies about me.

They are demanding that I pay back things that I did not steal!

5 O God, you know that I have foolishly disobeyed your laws;

you are aware of the sins that I have committed.

6 But Yahweh my Lord, commander of the heavenly armies,

may the wrong things I have done not disappoint the people who trust you.

You are the God whom we Israelite people should worship.

Please do not let me embarrass those who do worship you.

7 People have insulted me because I am loyal to you.
They have thoroughly humiliated me.
8 Even my own family members act as if they do not know me.
9 I care so much about your temple that people are causing trouble for me.
People are speaking disrespectfully of you, and it is as if they are also insulting me.
10 I wept and fasted very sincerely,
but they mocked me for doing that.
11 I wore rough clothing **to show that I was sad**,
but they used me as an example of a foolish person.
12 Even the elders of the city say bad things about me.
The drunkards in the city sing insulting songs about me.
13 But I will continue praying to you, Yahweh.
You are always very kind to me, as you have promised.
So at the time that you choose,
please answer my prayer by rescuing me,
since you love me faithfully.
14 Rescue me so that it will no longer be as if I were sinking in mud.
Rescue me from my enemies so that it will no longer be as if I were drowning.
15 Make it so that it will no longer be as if a flood were swirling around me
and I was about to go down to the bottom of deep water.
Rescue me so that I do not go to the place where dead people are.
16 Yahweh, it is so good that you faithfully love me,
so please do what I ask.
Because you are very merciful, please help me.
17 I am experiencing much trouble,
so please consider my situation
and act quickly to help me.
18 Come and save me;
please rescue me from my enemies.

19 You know personally how people are insulting, shaming, and dishonoring me.
You know who all my enemies are.
20 Their insults have deeply offended me, and I feel very badly.
I wanted someone to feel sorry for me and encourage me,
but no one did.
21 Instead, they put poison in my food,
and when I was thirsty, they gave me sour wine to drink.
22 May their own food be like a trap that they walk into!
May it harm their health.
23 May their eyes become dim so that they cannot see anything.
May their bodies keep getting weaker.
24 Become angry with them and punish them!
Angrily pursue them until you catch them.
25 Make them abandon their towns
so that no one lives in them anymore.
26 Do this because they did things to harm
people whom you were already disciplining.
They said that people whom you were correcting
were suffering **because they had done bad things**.
27 Punish them for every wrong thing they have done.
Do not forgive them!
28 Remove their names from the book that records the names of people who have everlasting life;
do not include them in your list of righteous people.
29 As for me, I am in bad circumstances, and I am suffering.
O God, please protect me and save me.
30 When God does that, I will sing a song to praise God,
and I will honor him by thanking him.
31 When I do that, it will please Yahweh more than if I had sacrificed oxen,
yes, he will like that better than if I had offered him full-grown bulls.
32 Humble people will be happy when they see **that God has rescued me**.

This will encourage people who worship God sincerely.

33 When needy people pray to Yahweh, he does what they ask.

He greatly respects people who suffer for him.

34 May the entire creation praise God:

the birds in the sky, the animals on the land, and the creatures in the sea.

35 May God protect the people who live in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah.

May he strengthen their cities so that they keep living in them as their territory.

36 May the descendants of the people who are loyal to him inherit that territory,

and may those who love him live there safely.

70

This is a note for the worship leader: David wrote this psalm to remind *God that he had promised to help him***.**

1 Yahweh my God, please act quickly to rescue me!

2 Some people are trying to kill me.

Embarrass them by making them fail to do that.

Some people would be happy to harm me.

Humiliate them by making them abandon that plan.

3 Some people are saying that I am suffering because I am a bad person.

Make them ashamed of saying that so that they stop saying it.

4 **Rescue me so that** everyone who is loyal to you will greatly celebrate.

Then the people who depend on you to rescue them will keep saying, "God certainly is great!"

5 But right now I am in very difficult circumstances,

so please act quickly to help me, God!

Yahweh, you are the one who helps me and saves me,

so please help me right away!

71

1 You, Yahweh, are the one who keeps me safe.

May it always be clear that I was right to trust you.

2 Because you always do what is right,

take action to help me.
Consider my situation and save me!
3 You declare that I will be safe,
since you are the one who keeps me safe and protects me,
so please be like a huge rock on top of which I can always go to be safe.
4 My God, please rescue me from what wicked people want to do to me.
Rescue me from the power of violent, evil men.
5 Yahweh my Lord, you are the one whom I confidently expect to help me.
I have trusted in you ever since I was young.
6 I have depended on you for my entire life;
you even made sure that I was born safely,
so I will always praise you.
7 It shocks many people to see me now,
but you are my mighty protector.
8 I praise you lavishly throughout the day for how glorious you are.
9 Please keep helping me now that I have become an old man.
Please help me even though I am not strong anymore.
10 My enemies are saying that they want to kill me,
and they are planning together how to do that.
11 They are saying, “No one will rescue him,
since God is not helping him anymore,
so we can pursue him and capture him.”
12 My God, do not neglect me;
hurry to help me!
13 Embarrass the people who want to kill me by making their plans fail.
Yes, completely shame and disgrace those who want to harm me!
14 But as for me, I will always trust you,
and I will praise you even more **now than I have in the past**.
15 I will tell people how you have saved me because you are good.
I will do that continually because there will always be more for me to say about this.

16 Yahweh my Lord, you are the one who gives me great strength.
I will recall to others how you do what is right in a way that no one else does.
17 God, you have taught me many things ever since I was young,
and I still tell people today about the wonderful things you do.
18 God, please keep helping me now that I am old and my hair is gray.
That way I will be able to tell my descendants how powerfully you have helped me.
19 God, you do so many great things because you are good,
it is as if they have piled up to the sky.
There is no one else like you, God!
20 You have allowed me to experience many very difficult things,
and it has seemed as if I was about to go to the place where dead people are,
but now please give me a good life again.
21 Please make me even greater than I was before,
and comfort me rather than allow me to have difficult experiences.
22 When you do that, then I will play my lute and praise you,
my God, for faithfully helping me.
I will play my harp as I sing to praise you.
You are the holy God whom we Israelites worship.
23 I will shout joyfully while I sing.
Because you will have rescued me,
I will sing to you wholeheartedly.
24 You will have defeated and disgraced the people who wanted to harm me,
so throughout the day I will describe how you did what was right.

72

1 ***A psalm of Solomon.***
O God, please enable the man who is now succeeding his father as king
to judge cases rightly, as you would do.
2 Enable him to judge the cases of Israelite people fairly,
especially for people who are vulnerable.
3 May the people live rightly so that they will be prosperous

as crops grow abundantly on the hillsides of the land.

4 Help the king to defend poor people and rescue needy people

and defeat those who are oppressing them.

5 May each successive generation of the people respect you.

May they do that for as long as the sun and the moon are in the sky!

6 May this king make the nation prosperous,

just as heavy rains soak the soil

and enable more hay to grow after a first cutting.

7 May people who live rightly prosper during the time when he reigns,

and may the nation be very prosperous for as long as the moon is in the sky.

8 May he rule over all of the surrounding territory, right up to the shores of the seas.

May his realm extend from the Euphrates River to the limits of the lands that people know.

9 May the leaders of the desert tribes bow down in front of him **to acknowledge him as their ruler**,

and may his enemies lie facedown on the ground **in submission to him**.

10 May the kings who rule the land of Tarshish and other coastal areas pay tribute to him.

May the king of Sheba and the king of Seba give him gifts.

11 In fact, may all the kings in the world acknowledge him as their ruler,

and may every nation obey him.

12 May all these things happen because he rescues needy people when they cry out for help

and he helps poor people who have no one else to help them.

13 May he feel compassion for people who are weak and needy and save their lives.

14 May their lives be important to him

so that he rescues them from people who are oppressing and harming them.

15 May this king live for a long time!

May he receive much fine gold.

May people always pray for him and ask God to bless him.

16 May the fields produce such abundant crops
that grain grows all the way up to the tops of the hills
and sways in the wind like the branches of the trees in Lebanon.
May the cities in Israel be as full of people as the fields are full of grass.
17 May people always remember what a good king this was,
for as long as the sun is in the sky!
May he do good things for many people,
and may the people of other nations say that he has a good life.
18 Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship;
he does amazing things that no one else can do.
19 Praise him forever for how glorious he is!
May his glory fill the whole world! Amen! Yes, amen!
20 This is the end of the prayers that David, the son of Jesse, wrote.

Book Three

73

1 ***Asaph wrote this psalm.***
God truly is good to us Israelite people,
to those who want to do what pleases God.
2 As for me, I almost stopped trusting in God;
I was almost guilty of committing a great sin against him
3 because I envied those who proudly acted as if they did not need God,
when I realized that they prospered even though they were wicked.
4 Those people do not suffer;
they always have plenty of food to eat.
5 They do not experience the difficult things that other people do;
they do not experience catastrophes and sicknesses like other people.
6 So they are proud and violent.
Their being prideful is like a necklace that they show off to others, and they openly display their violent actions like people openly display the clothes they wear.

7 Their eyes protrude because their faces are fat,
and they are always thinking about more evil things to do.
8 They scoff at other people, and wickedly talk about doing unjust things to them;
they speak pridefully.
9 They exalt themselves and talk as if they are God in heaven,
and they go about the earth talking boastfully.
10 The result is that people pay attention to them
and listen to everything they say.
11 Wicked people say to themselves, “God certainly does not care what we do;
the Most High certainly will not judge us for what we do!”
12 Look at how these wicked people live;
their lives are so easy that they never have to worry about anything, and they are always becoming richer.
13 **When I saw this I thought that** certainly it is useless that I have thought about things that are pleasing to you
and have not sinned.
14 Every day I suffer,
and every morning you punish me.
15 If I had said these things out loud in front of others,
surely I would have been sinning against your people.
16 When I tried to think about all this,
it was very difficult for me to understand it.
17 But when I went to the temple where people worship God,
then I understood what will happen to wicked people in the future.
18 I know that you make their future insecure;
you will cause them to be ruined.
19 God will suddenly destroy these wicked people;
they will die in terrible ways.
20 Lord, when you act, you will cause the wicked to quickly vanish;
they will vanish like a dream which disappears as soon as a person awakes from their sleep.

21 When I was grieved in my inner being
and felt emotionally hurt,
22 I was stupid and ignorant;
I behaved like an animal toward you.
23 Nevertheless I am always with you;
you constantly stay close to me.
24 You lead me by instructing me,
and when I die, you will take me into your glorious presence.
25 You are the only one I have in heaven!
There is nothing on this earth that I desire more than you.
26 My body and my spirit may become very weak,
but God enables me to feel encouraged;
he has granted to me that I would belong to him forever.
27 People who abandon you will perish;
you will ruin every person who is not loyal to you.
28 But for me, the only thing I need is to be close to God.
I trust in the Lord Yahweh to keep me safe
so that I may tell others everything you have done for me.

74

1 ***A Levite from the clan of Asaph wrote this song.***
God, it feels as if you have permanently abandoned us!
You care for us Israelites the way a shepherd cares for his flock.
So please do not continue to be angry with us.
2 Think about your people whom you chose long ago.
You rescued us from slavery so that we would belong to you.
Think about Mount Zion, where you have been present **in your temple**.
3 Come and walk through the ruins of your temple.
It seems that no one will ever rebuild it.
Look at all the damage that the enemy soldiers did to your temple.
4 Your enemies shouted in triumph right there in the place where you met with us Israelites.

They set up their battle flags to show that they had conquered it.

5 They acted like woodsmen who were swinging axes to cut down trees in a forest.

6 They smashed all the carved wooden panels with their axes and hammers.

7 Then they burned down your temple completely.

They treated the temple where you were present as if it were not a sacred place.

8 They said to themselves, “We will completely subdue the Israelites.”

They burned down every place in the land where people gathered to worship God.

9 You no longer give us any signs,

and there are no prophets anymore.

None of us knows how long this will last.

10 God, do not allow your opponents to continue to insult you!

Do not allow your enemies to keep treating you with disrespect anymore!

11 You should not fail to use your great power.

Use your power to destroy your enemies!

12 God, I acknowledge that you have ruled from ancient times.

You have been saving people throughout the earth.

13 By your great power, you pushed back the sea so that the dry land would appear.

You created order out of the watery chaos.

14 It was as if you smashed the heads of a chaos monster that lived in the sea

and left his body in the desert for scavengers to eat.

15 You are able to make springs and streams flow in dry areas,

but you are also able to dry up rivers that usually flow all the time.

16 You determine when it becomes day and when it becomes night.

You make it light during the day when the sun shines.

17 You are the one who set all the boundaries of the earth.

You are the one who created the seasons of summer and winter.

18 Yahweh, remember that your enemies have insulted you

and that foolish people have mocked your reputation.

19 Do not allow cruel enemies to destroy the people whom you cherish.

Save the lives of your vulnerable people before it is too late.

20 People are committing violent acts in places where they think others will not see them.

So we need you to help us. Please do that because of the covenant that you made with us.

21 We are asking you to help us; please do not disappoint us.

Then we poor and needy people will praise you for what you have done.

22 Take action to defend yourself, God!

Do not allow foolish people to keep insulting you!

23 Do not ignore what your enemies are saying.

Your opponents keep shouting things against you.

75

This is a note for the worship leader: Asaph wrote this song. The tune is "Do Not Destroy."

1 We thank you, God!

We thank you because you are close **to us**.

We tell people about the wonderful things that you have done.

2 **You say,** "I have set a time **to judge people**.

At that time, I will judge everyone fairly.

3 The earth may shake,

and everyone who lives on it may tremble.

But I am the one who holds it steady." *Selah*

4 I warn those who boast, "Stop boasting!"

I tell wicked people, "Do not be proud!

5 Do not brag about your power!

Do not speak arrogantly!"

6 **The one who judges and** honors people does not come from the east, west, or south.

7 God is the one who judges people;

he shames and punishes some people, and he honors other people.

8 It is as if Yahweh holds a cup **full of punishment** in his hand.
It is full of **punishment that is like** foaming wine mixed with spices.
He pours it out **to punish the wicked**,
and all the wicked people on earth must drink it.
He punishes them fully like they were drinking the cup to the last drop.

9 But as for me, I will never stop saying what the God whom Jacob worshiped has done;
I will never stop singing to praise him.
10 God promises this: "I will destroy the power of wicked people,
but I will increase the power of righteous people."

76

This is a note for the worship leader: to be accompanied by stringed instruments. Asaph wrote this psalm.

1 People in Judah know God.
He is famous in Israel.
2 His home is in Jerusalem.
He lives on Mount Zion.
3 There he shattered the flaming arrows.
He destroyed the shields, the swords, and the weapons of war. *Selah*

4 You are glorious and excellent.
You are more majestic than the mountains where you destroyed your enemies.
5 Enemy soldiers plundered the brave soldiers.
They have fallen into their final sleep.
None of the warriors were able to lift their hands **to defend themselves**.
6 When you, the God whom Jacob worshiped, shouted at them,
their war horses and their riders fell down dead.
7 You are the one whom everyone must fear.
No one can survive in your presence when you are angry.
8 You gave your decision from heaven.

The whole world was scared and silent.

9 This happened when you stood up to judge, O God,
to rescue all the oppressed people of the world. *Selah*

10 Even human anger will bring you praise.
You will use the rest of their anger as a weapon.

11 Make promises to Yahweh your God and keep them.
Let everyone around him bring gifts to the Awesome One.

12 He humbles the leaders,
and terrifies all the kings.

77

This is a note for the worship leader: Perform in the style of Jeduthun. Asaph wrote this song.

1 I cried out to God;
I cried aloud to him, and he listened to me.

2 When I was in trouble, I prayed to the Lord;
all during the night I lifted up my hands **while I prayed**,
and I did not stop **praying**.
But nothing could comfort me.

3 When I thought about God, I despaired;
as I thoughtfully considered **him**, I became weak and discouraged. *Selah*

4 All during the night he prevented me from sleeping;
I was so worried that I did not know what to say.

5 I thought about days that had passed;
I remembered what had happened in previous years.

6 During the night, I remembered the songs that I used to sing;
I thoughtfully considered, and I pondered these things:

7 **I feared that** the Lord would reject **me** forever
and that he would never be kind **to me** again.

8 **I wondered whether the Lord** had completely stopped being faithful
and had broken his promise to all future generations.

9 **I asked myself whether** God had forgotten to be gracious
and whether his anger had caused him to stop being compassionate. *Selah*

10 I said, "What causes me to be sad the most is that
it seems that God, who is greater than any other spirit being, is no longer using his power for us."

11 But then, Yahweh, I recall your great deeds;
I remember the wonderful things that you did in the past.

12 I contemplated all that you have done,
and I thought carefully about your mighty acts.

13 God, everything that you do is amazing;
there is certainly no god who is great like you are!

14 You are God, the one who performs miracles;
you showed to the people of many people groups that you are powerful.

15 By your power you rescued your people **from Egypt**;
you saved those who were descendants of Jacob and his son Joseph. *Selah*

16 It was as though the waters saw you and became very afraid,
and even the deepest part of the water shook.

17 Rain poured down from the clouds;
it thundered very loudly,
and lightning flashed in all directions.

18 Thunder crashed in the whirlwind—your voice!
Lightning lit up,
and the earth shook violently.

19 Then you walked through the sea
in a path that you made through the deep water,
but your footprints could not be seen.

20 You led your people as a shepherd leads his flock of sheep
while Moses and Aaron were the leaders of your people.

78

1 ***A song of Asaph.***

My friends, listen to what I am going to teach you;

pay careful attention to what I will say.

2 I am going to give you some sayings that wise people have said.
They will be sayings about things that happened long ago,
things that were difficult to understand.

3 These are things that we have heard and known previously,
things that our parents and grandparents told us.

4 We will tell these things to our children,
but we will also tell our grandchildren to praise Yahweh
for his power and the glorious things that he has done.

5 He gave requirements and instructions to the Israelites,
those who are descended from Jacob,
and he told our ancestors to teach them to their children.

6 He commanded this so that their children would also know them
and so that they would teach them to their own children.

7 In that way, they also would trust in God
and would not forget the things that he has done;
instead, they would obey his commandments.

8 They would not be like their ancestors,
who were very stubborn and kept rebelling against God;
they did not continue firmly trusting in God,
and they did not worship him alone.

9 The soldiers of the tribe of Ephraim had bows and arrows,
but they ran away from their enemies on the day that they fought with their enemies.

10 They did not do what they had agreed with God that they would do;
they refused to obey his laws.

11 They forgot what he had done;
they forgot about the miracles that they had seen him perform.

12 While our ancestors were watching,
God performed miracles in the area around the city of Zoan in Egypt.

13 Then he caused the Sea of Reeds to divide,
causing the water on each side to pile up like a wall,
with the result that our ancestors walked through it on dry ground.
14 He led them by a bright cloud during the day
and by a fiery light during the night.
15 He split rocks open in the wilderness
and gave to our ancestors plenty of water from deep inside the earth.
16 He caused a stream of water to flow from the rock;
the water flowed like a river.
17 But our ancestors continued to sin against God;
in the desert they rebelled against the one who is greater than any other spirit being.
18 By demanding that God give them the food that they desired,
they tried to find out if he would always do what they requested him to do.
19 They insulted God by saying,
"God surely cannot supply food for us here in this desert.
20 It is surely true that Moses struck the rock,
and God made a huge amount of water gush out,
but we, his people, **doubt** that he can also provide bread and meat for us."
21 So when Yahweh heard that, he became very angry,
and he sent a fire to burn up some of his Israelite people.
22 He did that because they did not trust in him,
and they did not believe that he would rescue them.
23 But God spoke to the sky above them
and commanded it to open like a door,
24 and then food fell down like rain,
food that they named "manna."
God gave them grain from heaven.
25 So the people ate the food that angels eat.
God gave to them all the manna that they wanted.
26 Later, he caused the wind to blow from the east,

and by his power he also sent wind from the south.

27 The wind brought birds to eat which fell like rain.
They were as uncountable as the grains of sand on the seashore.

28 God caused those birds to fall in the middle of their camp.
There were birds all around their tents.

29 So the people **cooked the birds and** ate the meat; their stomachs were full
because God had given them what they wanted.

30 But they had not yet eaten all that they wanted,

31 when God angrily killed some of their strongest men.
He even sent young Israelite men to their graves.

32 In spite of all this, the people continued to sin;
in spite of all the miracles that God had performed,
they still did not trust that he would take care of them.

33 So he shortened their lives so they seemed to only be a few days or like they were gone as quickly as a breath of air,
and he terrified them during even those few years.

34 Whenever God caused some of the Israelites to die,
the others would repent;
they would be sorry and seriously ask God to save them.

35 They would remember that God was like a huge rock on which they would be safe,
and that he, who was greater than any other spirit being, was the one who would buy them back.

36 But they tried to trick God by lying to him.

37 They were not loyal to him;
they did not keep the promises between God and them.

38 But God acted mercifully toward his people.
He forgave them for having sinned
and did not get rid of them.
Many times he decided not to become angry with them
and did not furiously punish them.

39 He remembered that they were only humans who die,
humans who disappear as quickly as a wind that blows by and then is gone.

40 Many times our ancestors rebelled against God in the wilderness
and made him very sad.

41 Many times they did evil things to find out if they could do those things without God punishing them.
They frequently caused the holy God whom the Israelites worship to become sad.

42 They did not remember how powerfully he had acted,
and they **forgot** about the time when he rescued them from their enemies.

43 They forgot about all the wonderfully powerful things he did near Zoan in Egypt.

44 He turned the rivers of **Egypt** to blood,
so that the people could not drink their streams.

45 He sent swarms of flies among the people of Egypt that bit them,
and he sent frogs that destroyed everything.

46 He gave their crops to the locusts.
He let swarming locusts eat everything they had worked for.

47 He killed their grape vines with hail,
and killed their sycamore trees with frost.

48 He sent a terrible thunderstorm with hail to kill all their domestic animals.

49 Because God was fiercely angry with the people of Egypt,
he caused them to be very distressed.
The disasters that struck them were like a group of angels that destroyed everything.

50 He let himself be angry with them,
and he did not prevent them from dying;
he sent a serious illness that killed many of them.

51 In that plague he caused all the firstborn sons of the people of Egypt to die.

52 Then he led his people out of Egypt like a shepherd leads his sheep,
and he guided them like a flock in the desert.

53 He led them safely, and they were not afraid,

but their enemies drowned in the sea.

54 Later God used his power to bring the Israelite people to the land he had set apart,

to this hill country that he had taken for himself.

55 He drove out the people groups as the Israelites advanced;

he distributed the land for each tribe to possess as their own,

and he settled the tribes of Israel in the homes of those peoples.

56 But the Israelites defied the God who is greater than all other spirit beings and disobeyed him to see what he would do.

They did not obey what he had required them to do.

57 They turned away and were unfaithful, just as their ancestors had been;

they were as unreliable as a bow that does not shoot straight.

58 They made God angry by worshiping at shrines on the hilltops,

and they made him jealous by worshiping carved idols.

59 When God saw what they were doing, he became very angry

and completely rejected the Israelite people.

60 He stopped living at Shiloh,

the place where he had set up his tent and lived among people.

61 He let enemies capture the sacred chest which showed how strong and glorious he was.

62 He let enemies kill his people in battle,

because he was very angry with the people who belonged to him.

63 Fire destroyed the young men,

and no one sang wedding songs for the young women.

64 Enemies killed the priests in battle,

and the wives they left behind were not able to mourn for them.

65 Then the Lord acted as though he had been sleeping and had woken up,

like a warrior who becomes alert after drinking wine.

66 He drove his enemies back

and disgraced them forever.

67 He did not choose the descendants of Joseph to be the leading tribe,

and he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.

68 Instead he chose the tribe of Judah
whose capital is on Mount Zion, which he loves.

69 He had them build his temple there, high up like the heavens,
and he established it to last as long as the earth.

70 He chose David, who served him,
and took him away from tending the sheep.

71 He took David from caring for the mother sheep and their lambs
and appointed him to lead the people of Israel, the people who belonged to God.

72 David led them with a sincere and devoted heart,
and he guided them with great skill.

79

1 ***A Levite from the clan of Asaph wrote this song.***

God, foreign nations have invaded the land that belongs to you.
They have made your holy temple unfit for worship,
and they have made Jerusalem a pile of ruins.

2 They left the dead bodies of the people who were faithful to you
for birds and wild animals to eat.

3 They killed so many of your people that blood flowed like water all around Jerusalem.
There were not enough people still alive to bury them.

4 The people of the nations around us insult us and laugh at us.

5 Yahweh, please do not stay so very angry with us,
even though we sinned against you by worshiping other gods.

6 The people of other nations do not honor you as God.
You should be angry with them and punish them,

7 because they are the ones who have killed so many Israelites
and destroyed the land in which they lived.

8 Please forgive the wicked things we did in the past.
Quickly be merciful to us,

because we are desperate.

9 God, you are the one who saves us, so please help us!
Do that for the sake of your glorious reputation.
Forgive us for our sins so that people will honor you.

10 Do not let the other nations say, “Their God was not able to help them!”
We want to see you punish those nations
for killing the people who serve you.

11 Listen to the moans of your people who are now captives,
and use your great power to save those who are about to die.

12 Lord, pay back our neighbors directly, seven times over,
for the insults they have spoken against you!

13 Then we will always thank you.
You care for us, your people, the way a shepherd cares for his sheep.
Each generation of Israelites will tell their children how wonderful you are.

80

This is a note for the worship leader: The tune is “Lilies.” A Levite from the clan of Asaph wrote this song as an appeal to Yahweh for help.

1 God, you are like a shepherd to the people of Israel, so please listen to me.
You lead the descendants of Joseph the way a shepherd leads his flock.
You were present with us in your temple above the statues of the cherubim;
reveal your glory to us again!

2 Just as you moved powerfully through the wilderness
right ahead of the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
come powerfully once again and save us.

3 God, make us strong again.
Regard us favorably and save us.

4 Yahweh, you are the God who commands the heavenly armies.
You have been angry with us, and so you have not been doing what we ask
when we pray to you. But please now answer our prayers.

5 You have caused us to experience constant sorrow.
It feels as if you are punishing us three times as much as we deserve.

6 The nations around us have become hostile to us,
and our enemies make fun of us.
7 God, you who command the heavenly armies, make us strong again!
Regard us favorably and save us.
8 You brought your people out of Egypt as if you were transplanting a vine from there.
You forced other nations to leave this land
and you allowed your people to settle in it,
as if you were planting that vine here.
9 You removed the foreign nations, just as a farmer clears the ground for a new plant.
This enabled your people to become a strong nation that occupied the entire country.
10 It was as if that vine became so large that its shadow darkened the mountains
and its branches were like great cedar trees.
11 They controlled the territory from the Great Sea in the west
to the Euphrates River in the east.
12 But now you have allowed enemies to invade and conquer us,
as if you had torn down a fence that protected that vine,
so that everyone who walked past it
could take whatever fruit they wanted from it.
13 Those enemies have destroyed the country,
as if a wild boar had chewed up that vine
and wild animals ate what remained.
14 God, commander of the heavenly armies, please help us again!
Look down from heaven and see what is happening to us!
Come and care for your people, who are like a vine that you planted
15 and worked hard to make sure that it would grow well.
Your people are also like your own son whom you helped grow up to be strong.
16 But now, because you do not regard them favorably,

their enemies are destroying them
as if someone had cut down that vine and burned it.

17 Even though we are human, we are like your own son
whom you helped grow up to be strong,
so please help us with your power.
Restore us to a position of honor.

18 Then we will not worship other gods again.
Give us new life, and we will worship only you.

19 Yahweh, the God who commands the heavenly armies, make us strong again!
Regard us favorably and save us.

81

This is a note for the worship leader: Accompany the song with a stringed instrument. A Levite from the clan of Asaph wrote this song.

1 Sing joyfully to God, who makes us strong!
Shout with joy to the God whom we Israelites worship!

2 Start playing music! Beat tambourines
and play lyres and pleasant-sounding harps.

3 Blow a ram's horn for the new-moon festival **each month**
and on the day of the full moon when the Festival of Shelters begins.

4 Do this because the God whom we Israelite people worship
has commanded us to do it.

5 God told our ancestors to observe these festivals
when he delivered them from slavery to the Egyptians,
a people whose language they did not understand.

6 **Yahweh says,** "They had to hold on to heavy baskets full of bricks
as they carried them on their shoulders,
but I freed them from doing that.

7 When they were suffering, they cried to me for help, and I rescued them.
At Mount Sinai, I spoke to them from dark clouds **and gave them laws**.
Then I saw whether they trusted me
when they complained at Meribah that they had no water. *Selah*

8 Listen to me, my people, while I warn you!
I wish that you Israelites would pay attention to me!
9 You must not make any idols that represent any of the gods that other nations worship.
You must never bow down to worship any of those gods.
10 I am Yahweh your God.
I am the one who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.
If you depend on me,
I will provide everything that you need.
11 However, my people would not listen to what I said;
the Israelites refused to obey me.
12 So I let them do whatever they stubbornly wanted to do;
they did whatever they had decided to do.
13 I wish that my people would obey me!
Yes, I wish that the Israelites would live the way I want them to!
14 Then I would use my power against those who are opposing them,
and I would easily defeat their enemies.
15 Then those who had rebelled against Yahweh
would bow down fearfully in front of him **to submit to his authority**.
But the Israelites would always prosper.
16 I would make their fields produce abundant crops,
and they would even find all the honey they wanted
in wild bee hives in rocky places."

82

1 ***A Levite from the clan of Asaph wrote this song.***
God has taken his place in the assembly that he governs;
he pronounces judgment on the rulers there.
2 He says, "You must stop making unjust decisions
and favoring wicked people! *Selah*
3 Defend poor people and orphans,
and decide cases fairly for people who have no one else to help them.

4 Save defenseless people
from what wicked people want to do to them!
5 You are foolish and ignorant!
You do not recognize the right things to do.
People are no longer living by the basic principles that make a society fair.
6 I said, ‘You are spiritual beings;
you are all rulers over creation like the Most High.
7 But you will die as humans do;
you will lose your power just as rulers do.’”
8 God, you rule all the nations,
so take action and judge the people who live on the earth!

83

A Levite from the clan of Asaph wrote this song.

1 God, please take action to help us!
Please do that right away!
2 I ask this because the enemies who hate you
are defiantly approaching us with a large army.
3 They have plotted deviously together
to fight against us Israelites whom you cherish.
4 They have said to each other, “Come on, let us destroy them so completely
that no one will ever remember that Israel existed!”
5 They have all agreed to do this,
and they have made an alliance against you.
6 This army includes soldiers who are Edomites, Ishmaelites,
Moabites, Hagrites,
7 Gebalites, Ammonites, Amalekites,
Philistines, and Tyrians.
8 The Assyrians are helping them.
They have given military support to the Moabites and Ammonites
who are leading this army. *Selah*

9 Defeat them just as you helped Gideon defeat the Midianites,
and just as you helped Barak defeat Sisera,
the commander of the Canaanite king Jabin at the Kishon River!
10 You destroyed those Canaanites at En Dor,
and their dead bodies rotted on the ground.
11 Kill the leaders of this invading army
just as Gideon killed Oreb and Zeeb, the Midianite commanders.
Defeat all their rulers just as Gideon defeated Zebah and Zalmunna, **the Midianite rulers**.
12 They too had said, "Let us take for ourselves
the land where God's people dwell."
13 My God, please defeat them so that they run away
just as tumbleweed rolls away
and just as chaff flies away in the wind!
14 Just as a forest fire burns down trees
and flames burn up the dry vegetation on hillsides,
15 make them run away afraid
as if a great storm were driving them off.
16 Completely disgrace them
so that they will acknowledge who you are, Yahweh.
17 Embarrass them and make them always afraid.
Humiliate them until they die.
18 Then they will know that you alone, Yahweh,
are the Most High God who rules over everyone in the world.

84

This is a note for the worship leader: Accompany the song with a stringed instrument. One of the Korahites wrote this psalm.

1 Yahweh, commander of the heavenly armies,
what a wonderful place your temple is!
2 I long greatly, deep inside,
to be in the courtyards of Yahweh's temple.

With my whole being I call out
to the only true God.

3 Even little birds have built their nests near your temple,
and that is where they are taking care of their babies.
Yahweh, commander of the heavenly armies,
you are my king and my God.

4 What a good life people have who live by your temple!
They worship you continually there. *Selah*

5 What a good life people have whom you make strong
so that they can travel to your temple as they greatly desire!

6 As they pass through the **arid** Valley of Baca, they dig wells to look for water,
and God sends autumn rains that fill those wells with life-giving water.

7 They become stronger as they go,
and each of them arrives at the temple in Zion
where God is present.

8 Yahweh, you are the God who commands the heavenly armies.
Please answer my prayer.
You are the God whom we Israelite people worship.
Please do what I ask. *Selah*

9 God, please treat favorably the king you have appointed
to protect us.

10 It is better be in your temple courtyards for a single day
than to be anywhere else for a thousand days.
I would rather stand at the entrance to the courtyard of my God's temple
than stay in any of the **comfortable** homes where wicked people live.

11 Yahweh our God makes us prosper, just as the sun makes crops grow,
and he protects us, just as a shield protects a warrior.
He is kind to us and honors us.
Yahweh gives people who live rightly
every good thing that they need.

12 Yahweh, commander of the heavenly armies,

what a good life people have who trust you!

85

This is a note for the worship leader: One of the Korahites wrote this psalm.

1 Yahweh, you have brought back the Israelites who were exiles
so that this land can be prosperous again.
2 You forgave all the sins that your people committed. *Selah*
3 You completely ceased being angry with us
and stopped punishing us severely.
4 God, you are the one who saves us.
Please stop being upset with us, and make us strong again.
5 Please do not be continually angry with us
and with our children and grandchildren.
6 Please help us so that we will thrive again.
Then we, your people, will be happy because of you.
7 Yahweh, please treat us kindly as you promised
and rescue us from our troubles.
8 I am going to listen to what Yahweh, my God, says to me.
I believe he will say that he will make his people thrive if they are loyal to him.
However, they must not do foolish things anymore.
9 He is surely ready to help people who deeply respect him.
Then he will be gloriously present with us in our land.
10 He will be faithfully kind and true to us.
He will do what is right and make us peaceful.
11 People on earth will be faithful to God,
and God will act justly toward us from heaven.
12 Yes, Yahweh will give us good things,
and our land will produce abundant harvests.
13 As he considers what to do,
he will recognize what the right thing is to do,
and he will do that.

86

A prayer of David.

Yahweh, I am poor and helpless,
so please do what I ask.
I am loyal to you, so please protect me.
I worship you as my God and I trust you,
so please save me.
I have been crying out to you continually, Lord,
so please be kind to me.
I am asking you to help me, Lord, as someone who worships you,
so please make me happy by doing that.
Do this, Lord, because you are good and you forgive people's sins.
You very faithfully love everyone who prays to you.
Yahweh, I am pleading with you in prayer to help me;
please do what I ask.
Whenever I am in trouble, I call out to you,
because I know that you will help me.
Lord, among all the gods that the nations worship,
there is none like you;
none of them has done the great things that you have done.
Lord, the nations that you have made
will all come and bow down before you,
and they will praise you.
They will do this because you are great and you do amazing things;
you are the only true God.
Yahweh, please teach me how you want me to live
so that I will act properly, as you wish.
Give me a sincere desire to honor you.
Lord my God, I will thank you wholeheartedly,
and I will praise you forever.
I will do that because you have been so faithfully kind to me;

you have kept me from going way down into the place where dead people are.

14 God, proud people are attacking me.
Yes, a group of cruel people is trying to kill me;
those people do not respect you.

15 But you, Lord, are a God who is merciful and kind.
You do not quickly become angry,
and you are so faithfully kind and true to us.

16 Consider my situation and be kind to me;
make me, your servant, strong.
Help me as if I had been born in your household.

17 Do something to show that you are helping me
so that my enemies will see it, and it will embarrass them.
I believe that you, Yahweh, will help me
and comfort me.

87

1 ***One of the Korahites wrote this song.***

Yahweh established his city on mountains that he made holy.

2 He loves the city of Zion
more than any other place where Israelites live.

3 People say wonderful things about this city that belongs to God. *Selah*

4 **Yahweh says,** "When I talk about people who know me,
this will include Egyptians and Babylonians.
Indeed, I will also say about Philistines and Tyrians and Cushites,
'This person is a native of Zion.'"

5 People will say about Zion, "Every one of those people is a native of that city,"
and God Most High will personally keep Zion strong.

6 When Yahweh registers each of those people,
he will record, "This person is a native of Zion." *Selah*

7 Singers and musicians **will celebrate and say**,
"Zion, everything that makes me flourish comes from you!"

88

One of the Korahites wrote this song. This is a note for the worship leader: The tune is "Weakness of Afflicting." Heman the Ezrahite wrote this song.

1 Yahweh, you are the God who saves me.
I continually ask you to help me.
2 Please pay attention to what I am saying as I pray to you.
3 I ask this because I have experienced so many bad things that I cannot endure any more;
I am about to die and go to the place where dead people are.
4 People expect me to die soon
because I have so little strength left.
5 It is as if I belong among dead people
who are lying in their graves.
It seems that you are no longer aware of such people
and you stop taking care of them.
6 It is as though you have thrown me down to the bottom of a deep, dark pit.
7 I feel as if you are angry with me, and that is like an oppressive burden to me.
It is as if I am drowning in your anger. *Selah*
8 Because my illness is so unpleasant and you have not healed me,
my friends stay away from me,
and I am not able to leave my home **to visit anyone**.
9 My eyes are swollen because I cry so much.
Yahweh, throughout the day I call out to you for help
as I spread out my hands toward you **in prayer**.
10 If I were to die, it would be too late for you to do a miracle to help me.
Dead people do not come back to life and praise you! *Selah*
11 Dead bodies in graves do not talk about how you faithfully love us.
In the place where dead people go, no one talks about how faithful you are.
12 No one in that dark place sees the amazing things you do;
no one in the place where no one remembers anything knows how good you are.
13 But I **am still alive,** Yahweh, and I am calling out to you to help me.

It is as if my prayer is already there waiting for you when you get up in the morning.

14 Yahweh, please do not reject me!

Please do not ignore me!

15 Since I was young, I have been so ill that I have nearly died.

I have been sick for so long with this terrible illness that you permit

that I have no more hope.

16 I feel as if you are very angry with me.

This terrible illness that you permit has destroyed the good life I could have had.

17 The bad things that are happening to me are like floodwaters

that continually surround me and are about to drown me.

18 Because you have allowed this illness,

my friends and family members stay away from me.

I can no longer see where they are.

89

Ethan the Ezrahite wrote this song.

1 Yahweh, I will always sing about how faithfully you love your people.

I will tell my children and grandchildren that you always do what you promise.

2 I know that you will always love us faithfully.

Just as the sky is permanent, so you will always be faithful to us.

3 Yahweh has said, "I made a covenant with the man I chose **to be the king of Israel**.

That was David, who loyally obeyed me.

I made a solemn promise to him.

4 I said, 'I will make sure that your descendants always rule as kings;

yes, I will make sure that your dynasty never ends.'" *Selah*

5 Yahweh, the angels in heaven praise you for the wonderful things you do,

When those holy beings gather, they celebrate how you always do what you promise.

6 No one in the sky is equal to Yahweh!
None of the heavenly beings is like Yahweh!
7 When the holy beings gather together, they all respect God greatly.
Everyone around his throne honors him.
8 Yahweh, you are the God who commands the heavenly armies.
No one is as mighty as you are!
You are always faithful in every way.
9 You control the sea so that it does not become too violent;
when its waves become too large, you make them smaller.
10 It was you who **put the world in order as you created it, as if you had** completely destroyed the sea monster Rahab;
You used your great power to defeat your enemies.
11 Because you created the world and everything in it,
the sky belongs to you, and the earth also belongs to you.
12 You created the full extent of the world around us.
You made everything to the north and to the south.
You made everything to the west, where Mount Tabor is,
and you made everything to the east, where Mount Hermon is.
People throughout the world joyfully praise you because of who you are.
13 You are very powerful; yes, you are very strong,
and you use your power to do great things.
14 As you rule, you always do what is right and just,
and you are always faithful and true in everything you do.
15 Yahweh, the people who worship you with joyful shouts have truly good lives;
they enjoy your favor as they live.
16 They rejoice continually because of who you are,
and they celebrate how you always do what is right.
17 You make your people strong and glorious,
and because you were pleased with us, you gave us a good king.
18 The one who protects us belongs to you, Yahweh;
yes, our king belongs to you, the holy God whom we Israelites worship.

19 Long ago you spoke in a vision to the Israelites who were loyal to you.
You said, “I have given strength to a mighty warrior;
I have chosen a young man from among the people **to be the king**.
20 I have found David, who loyally obeys me,
and I have had people anoint him with my holy oil **to appoint him as king**.
21 I will always support him with my power;
indeed, I will make him strong.
22 He will never have to pay tribute to a foreign ruler,
and no wicked enemy will defeat him.
23 I will defeat his opponents when they fight against him;
yes, I will destroy his enemies.
24 I will always be faithful to him and treat him kindly,
and I will make him a great ruler by my own authority.
25 I will make his realm extend from the Great Sea to the Euphrates River.
26 He will call out to me, ‘You are my Father;
you are my God, the one who protects me and saves me!’
27 For my part, I will treat him as if he were my firstborn son,
and I will make him the greatest of all the kings on the earth.
28 I will always love him faithfully,
and I will always honor my covenant with him.
29 I will make sure that his descendants always rule as kings,
so that his dynasty lasts as long as the sky exists.
30 However, if his descendants disobey my instructions
and do not live according to what I have decreed,
31 if they treat my decrees as something they can ignore,
and if they do not obey my commands,
32 then I will punish them to correct them
because of the wrong things they have done
as if I were hitting them with a rod.
33 But I will not stop faithfully loving David;
I will not fail to do what I promised **for his descendants**.

34 I will not break my covenant;
no, I will not take back what I said.
35 I guaranteed my promise to David by my own holy character.
I said that I was not lying to him, and I meant it.
36 I promised solemnly that his descendants would rule as kings forever.
Yes, I said that I would preserve his dynasty
just as I have made the sun to shine in the sky always.
37 The moon appears in the sky dependably each month,
and in the same way, David's dynasty will always endure." *Selah*
38 Yet now it appears that you have completely rejected
David's descendant who was our king.
It appears that you have abandoned him.
39 It seems as though you are disregarding the covenant you made with David.
You have allowed his dynasty to end, as if you had not promised to preserve it.
40 You have allowed enemies to break down
all the walls that protected his city **of Jerusalem**.
It had strong defenses, but you have allowed those enemies to reduce them to ruins.
41 Now people can come along and steal the things that remain in the city.
People in the surrounding countries are ridiculing us Israelites.
42 You have allowed our enemies to become strong,
and they are celebrating how they have defeated us.
43 Our armies have had to retreat from battles
because you have not helped us when we fight.
44 Our kingdom is no longer glorious,
and we no longer have a king.
45 We are no longer strong, as young men are.
This has disgraced us completely. *Selah*
46 Yahweh, please help us, and do not delay! Do not keep neglecting us!
Do not keep being so angry with us!

47 Please remember how short human lives are!
Please remember that you created us human beings as mere mortals!
48 No one can live forever and never die;
everyone must go to the place where dead people are. *Selah*
49 Lord, you promised David that you would faithfully love us Israelites, and you did.
You always keep your promises, so please help us!
50 Lord, consider the insulting things that many people are saying
about us who loyally obey you!
I deeply feel the pain of all those insults.
51 Yahweh, do something to stop your enemies
from mocking the actions of the king you appointed.
52 May people always bless Yahweh!
Amen! Yes, amen!

Book Four

90

A prayer by the prophet Moses

1 Lord, you have been like a home for us
throughout our generations.
2 Before you created the mountains,
before you formed the earth and everything that is in it,
you were eternally God,
and you will be God forever.
3 When people die, you cause their corpses to become soil again;
you change their corpses to become dirt like that from which the first man was created.
4 When you consider time,
a thousand years are as short as one day that passes;
you consider that they are as short as a few hours in the night.
5 You cause people to die suddenly;

they live only a short time as a dream lasts only a short time.

They are like grass in the morning that comes and goes.

6 In the morning the grass sprouts and develops,

then in the evening it dries up and completely withers.

7 Similarly, because of the sins that we commit, you become angry with us;

you terrify us and then you destroy us.

8 It is as though you place our sins in front of you;

spreading out even our secret sins where you can see them.

9 Because you are angry with us, you cause our lives to end;

the years that we live pass as quickly as a sigh passes.

10 People live for only seventy years;

if they are strong, some of them live for eighty years.

But throughout our time we have much pain and troubles;

our lives soon end, and we die.

11 No one has fully experienced the powerful things that you can do to people when you are angry with them,

No, people are not adequately afraid of how you can punish them because you are angry with them.

12 So teach us to realize that we live for only a short time

in order that we may think wisely about how we use our time.

13 Yahweh, how long will you be angry with us?

Pity us who serve you.

14 Each morning, show us that it is enough for us if you love us faithfully as you have promised that you would do.

Show us this so that we may shout joyfully and be happy all during the years that we live.

15 Cause us now to be happy for as many years as you afflicted us and we experienced bad things.

16 Enable us who serve you to see the great things that you do,

and enable our descendants to see your glorious power also.

17 Lord, our God, give us your blessings

and enable us to be successful;
yes, cause us to be successful in everything that we do!

91 **1** Those people whom God Most High protects
will be able to rest safely because Shaddai cares for them.
2 I will declare to Yahweh,
"You protect me;
you are like a stronghold in which I am safe.
You are my God, the one in whom I trust."
3 He will rescue you from all hidden traps
and save you from deadly diseases.
4 He will protect you as a bird does who covers her young under her wings.
You will be safe in his care.
As he faithfully does what he has promised, that is like a shield or strong wall that will protect you.
5 You will not be afraid of things that happen during the night that could terrorize you
or of arrows **that your enemies will shoot at you** during the day.
6 You will not be afraid of plagues that infect people in the night
or of other evil forces that kill people in the light of day.
7 Even if a thousand people fall dead alongside you,
even if ten thousand people are dying around you,
the deadly thing will not harm you.
8 All you need to do is watch
and you will see that God is punishing evil people!
9 This is because you trust Yahweh, God Most High, who protects me,
to also protect you.
10 Therefore, nothing evil will happen to you;
no plague will affect your family
11 because Yahweh will command his angels
to protect you in whatever you are doing.

12 They will even hold you up with their hands
so that you will not hurt your foot on a big stone.
13 Yahweh will not allow your enemies to harm you;
even if strong lions and poisonous snakes attack you, you will defeat them!
14 Yahweh says, “I will rescue those who love me;
I will protect them because they know me.
15 When they call out to me, I will answer them.
I will help them when they are experiencing trouble;
I will rescue them and honor them.
16 I will reward them by enabling them to live a long time,
and I will save them.”

92

A psalm that is to be sung on Sabbath days.

1 Yahweh, it is good for people to thank you
and to sing as they praise you, the Most High God.
2 It is good to proclaim every morning that you faithfully love us
and to declare each night that everything that you say is true,
3 **singing to the music** of **instruments that have** ten **strings**
and of lyres
and with **musicians playing** melodies on a harp.
4 I do this, Yahweh, because what you have done makes me happy;
I sing joyfully because of the things that you do.
5 Yahweh, the things that you do are great!
We cannot understand all that you think.
6 These are things that foolish people do not know about,
things that dolts cannot understand:
7 **They do not understand that** when the number of wicked people increases as blades of grass increase,
and **when it seems that** all those who do what is evil prosper,
Yahweh will destroy them forever.
8 But Yahweh, you will rule forever.

9 Just look at your enemies, Yahweh! Your enemies will certainly die.
You will destroy everyone who does wicked things.
10 But you have caused me to be as strong as a wild ox;
you have caused me to be very joyful.
11 I have observed my enemies as they oppose me,
and I have heard those evil men.
12 But righteous **people** will prosper like **flourishing** palm trees,
they will grow like the **tall** cedar trees in Lebanon.
13 They belong to Yahweh as securely as if they were trees with roots deep in his temple grounds.
They are as prosperous and healthy as if they were trees growing in our God's courtyard.
14 They are like trees that continue to bear fruit even when they are old.
They remain strong and full of energy, like trees that are full of sap and have abundant leaves.
15 That shows that Yahweh is just;
he is like a huge rock behind which I am safe,
and he never does anything that is unjust.

93 1 Yahweh, you are the King!
It is as though you are wearing royal robes that are majestic and powerful.
You are the one who put the world firmly in place, and no one can move it **out of its place**.
2 You have been king since long ago;
you have always existed.
3 Yahweh, the oceans rise up;
their waves **loudly** pound **against the shore**;
it is as though they roar with a powerful voice.
4 But you are more powerful than the roar of those oceans;
you are more powerful than the huge ocean waves!
You are Yahweh, the one who is great and powerful!
5 Yahweh, your laws are completely reliable;

your temple is a beautifully holy place.
That will be true forever.

94

1 Yahweh, you are a God who punishes your enemies.
So reveal to them who you are!
2 You are the one who judges all people on the earth;
so take action and give the arrogant people what they deserve.
3 Yahweh, wicked people just continue to be glad,
and that is not right!
4 They abundantly speak arrogant things;
all people who do evil things say that they are great people.
5 Yahweh, it is as though those wicked people were crushing us, your people;
they distress the people who belong to you alone.
6 They murder widows, people from other countries,
and also young people who have no fathers.
7 Those wicked people think to themselves, "Yahweh does not see any of this;
the God whom the Israelites worship does not notice the evil things that we do."
8 You wicked people in Israel need to understand what is right;
you have been stupid and foolish far too long!
9 Since Yahweh is the one who made ears,
of course he can hear what you say!
Not only that, he created eyes;
so of course he can see the evil things that you do!
10 He corrects the leaders of other nations,
so he will punish you, as well.
He has taught people everything that they know,
so of course he knows everything that you do.
11 Yahweh knows everything that people are thinking;
he knows that what they think is evil and useless.
12 Yahweh, how fortunate are those who allow you to discipline them,

how fortunate are those whom you teach from your laws!

13 You relieve those people from bad things when they happen,
and someday you will punish the wicked people
and stop them from doing wicked things.

14 This will happen because Yahweh will not reject his people;
he will not desert those who belong to him.

15 Yes, someday judges will again decide matters fairly for people,
and all honest people will be pleased about that.

16 But when evil people oppressed me,
I could find no one to defend me
against the wicked things that evil people did to me.

17 If Yahweh had not helped me at that time,
I would have gone quickly to the place where dead people say nothing.

18 Just when I thought, "I am about to die,"
then, Yahweh, you saved me by being faithful and loving to me.

19 Whenever I am very worried,
you comfort me and cause me to be happy.

20 Corrupt rulers,
those who establish laws that allow people to do what is not right,
cannot be your friends.

21 They plot together how to destroy righteous people,
and they declare that innocent people must die.

22 But Yahweh has become like a fortress for me;
my God is like a huge rock that protects me.

23 He will do to those wicked leaders the terrible things that they have done to others;
he will get rid of them because they do wicked things.
Yes, Yahweh our God will get rid of them.

95

1 Everyone, come and let us sing to Yahweh;
let us shout joyfully to the one who protects us and saves us!

2 Let us thank him as we come before him
and sing joyful psalms as we praise him.
3 Because Yahweh is a great God.
He is a great king who rules over all other spirit beings.
4 He controls the whole earth.
From the deepest places to the highest mountains, it belongs to him.
5 The seas are his because he is the one who made them.
He also made the dry land.
6 **Everyone,** come, let us worship him and bow down **before him**.
Let us kneel before Yahweh, who is the one who made us.
7 **Do this** because he is our God,
and we are the people whom he protects,
like sheep that a shepherd takes care of.
I desire that today you may hear what Yahweh is saying to you.
8 He says, "Do not become stubborn as your ancestors did at Meribah,
and as they did long ago at Massah in the wilderness.
9 There your ancestors tested whether I would continue to be patient with them.
They wanted to see if they could do evil things and not have me punish them.
They did this even though they had seen me perform many miracles.
10 For 40 years I was angry with those people.
I said about them, 'Those people are unreliable.
They completely refuse to obey my commands.'
11 So because I was very angry, I solemnly said about them,
'They will never enter **the land of Canaan** where I would have allowed them to rest!'"

96 1 Sing to Yahweh a new song!
All you people throughout the earth, sing to Yahweh!
2 Sing to Yahweh and praise him!
Every day proclaim to others that he has saved us.
3 Tell about how glorious he is to all people groups;

tell all peoples everywhere the marvelous things that he has done.

4 Do this because Yahweh is great, and he deserves very much for people to praise him;

people should revere him more than all other gods.

5 This is true because all of the gods that the other peoples worship are only idols,

but it is Yahweh who made the heavens!

6 Yahweh is magnificent and majestic.

His holy house shows how strong and beautiful he is.

7 You peoples in nations all over the earth,

Proclaim that Yahweh is the one who is truly glorious and strong!

8 Praise Yahweh as he deserves for us to praise him;

bring an offering and come to his temple.

9 Bow down before Yahweh because he is marvelously holy.

Everyone on earth should tremble because of who he is.

10 Say to **all** the people groups, "Yahweh is the king!"

He put the world in its place, and nothing will ever be able to move it.

He judges **all** the peoples fairly.

11 All the beings that are in the heavens should be glad, and all the people on the earth should rejoice.

The oceans and all the creatures that are in the oceans should roar **to praise Yahweh**.

12 Let it be as though the fields and everything that is in them are rejoicing.

Then let it be as though all the trees in the forests are singing joyfully

13 in front of Yahweh.

They should do this because he is coming to judge everyone on the earth, and this is certain.

He will judge all the people fairly according to what he knows is true.

97

1 Yahweh is the king!

I want everyone on the earth to be glad

and I want all the people who live on the land in and around the oceans to **also** rejoice **about that**!

2 There are very dark clouds all around him;
he always rules righteously and justly.
3 He sends fire out in front of him,
and **that fire** burns all of his enemies.
4 All around the world he sends his bright lightning;
people on the earth see **it**, and it causes them **to be afraid and** to tremble.
5 The mountains melt like wax before Yahweh;
he is the Lord who rules over all of the earth.
6 Everything that people can see in the heavens makes it clear that he is righteous,
and all the people groups see how glorious he is.
7 Everyone who worships carved images should be ashamed;
all those who are proud of their useless false gods should be ashamed.
All those gods should bow down to worship Yahweh!
8 The people of Jerusalem heard **Yahweh's just decrees** and they were happy **about them**;
people in the other cities in Judah also **heard and** rejoiced
because you judge **people** justly, Yahweh.
9 Of course, Yahweh, you are the supreme king who rules over all the earth;
You are far more powerful than any other spirit beings.
10 All you who love Yahweh, you must hate every evil thing **that people do**!
Yahweh protects those who are faithful to him;
he rescues them when wicked people try to harm them.
11 He makes good things happen for righteous people
and he causes those who are honest to rejoice.
12 You righteous people, let Yahweh make you glad,
and thank him, the one we all know to be holy!

98

1 ***A psalm.***
Sing to Yahweh a new song
because he has done wonderful things!
By being powerfully holy he has saved **his people**.

2 Yahweh has shown openly that he saves his people;
he has revealed to people all over the world that he always does what is right.
3 He is always loyal to his covenant to be faithful to the Israelite people.
Even the people who live in the most remote places of the earth
will see that our God saves his people.
4 All you people everywhere should shout joyfully to Yahweh;
praise him while you sing joyfully and make music!
5 Play to Yahweh on a harp,
and sing along as you play.
6 Some of you should blow trumpets and ram's horns
while others shout joyfully to Yahweh, our king!
7 The oceans and all the creatures that are in the oceans should roar to praise Yahweh.
The earth itself and everyone on it should do the same!
8 It should seem as though the rivers were clapping their hands to praise Yahweh
and that the hills were singing together joyfully
9 before Yahweh because he will come to judge everyone on the earth!
He will judge all the people in the world justly and fairly.

99 1 Yahweh is the supreme king,
so all people should tremble in front of him!
He sits on his throne in the temple above the statues of the cherubim,
so the earth should quake!
2 Yahweh is a mighty king in Jerusalem;
he is also the supreme ruler of all peoples.
3 They should praise you, Yahweh, because you are great and awesome!
They should say, "He is holy!"
4 Yahweh is a mighty king because he loves what is just.
You, Yahweh, have established what is fair.
You have acted justly and righteously for the people of Israel.
5 Praise Yahweh, the God whom we worship!

Bow down to him at the temple, which is his footstool.
He is holy!

6 Moses and Aaron were two of his priests;
Samuel also was someone who prayed to him.
Those three cried out to Yahweh to help them,
and he helped them.

7 He spoke to Moses and Aaron from the cloud that was like a huge pillar.
They obeyed all the laws and commandments that he gave to them.

8 Yahweh, our God, you helped Moses, Aaron, and Samuel
when they cried out to you to help them;
you are the God who forgave them for the sins that they had committed,
even though you punished them for the things that they did that were wrong.

9 Praise Yahweh, our God,
and worship him at the temple on his holy hill;
it is right to do that because Yahweh, our God, is holy!

100

1 ***A psalm of thanksgiving.***

Everyone in the world should shout joyfully to Yahweh!

2 We should worship Yahweh gladly!
We should come before him singing joyfully.

3 We should acknowledge that Yahweh is God.
It is he who made us; we did not make ourselves.
We are the people who belong to him;
we are like sheep that he cares for as a shepherd does.

4 Enter the gates of his temple thanking him;
enter the courtyard of his temple singing songs to praise him!
Thank him and praise him

5 because Yahweh always does good things for us.
He will faithfully love us forever,
and he will always fulfill everything that he has promised.

101

1 ***David wrote this psalm.***

Yahweh, I will praise you with singing!

I will sing that you are just and that you faithfully love us.

2 I will examine how to live in the right way.

Yahweh, I need you to come and help me!

In everything that I do in my household, I will sincerely try to do what is right.

3 I will not tempt myself to do any bad thing.

I hate any kind of sinful action;

I will not allow myself to think about doing those things.

4 I will not be dishonest,

and I will not do anything evil.

5 I will get rid of anyone who secretly slanders someone else.

I will not tolerate anyone who is proud or arrogant.

6 I look for people in this land who are loyal to God

to help me rule **this nation**.

Only people who behave honestly may work for me.

7 I will not allow anyone who deceives others **to work** in my palace,

and I will not allow anyone who tells lies to continue working for me.

8 I will start every day by working to get rid of all of the wicked people in this land.

I will expel everyone who does what is evil from this city that belongs to Yahweh.

102

Someone wrote this prayer when he was feeling discouraged and pleads for Yahweh to help him.

1 Yahweh, please listen to me when I pray to you;

yes, please be attentive as I cry out to you!

2 When distressing things happen to me, please do not ignore me!

Listen to me,

and answer me quickly as soon as I call out to you!

3 Please hurry because my life is ending as quickly as smoke that disappears;

my body feels like a fire is burning it.

4 I feel as though I am withering away like grass that the sun has scorched.
You see, I do not even remember to eat any food.

5 I groan aloud so much
that my bones protrude under my skin.

6 I am **lonely and despised** like an owl in the desert;
I have become like a screech owl in the ruins **of a town**.

7 I lie awake **at night**;
I am like a lonely bird sitting on a housetop.

8 During the whole of each day my enemies insult me.
Those who make fun of me use my name when they curse people,
saying, "May you be like him."

9-10 It feels as though you have picked me up and thrown me away!
Because you are so very angry with me,
my food tastes like ashes
and my tears fall into my drink.

11 My time to remain alive is **coming to an end**
like an evening shadow **that will soon be gone**.
I have withered as grass withers **in the hot sun**.

12 But Yahweh, you will rule forever on your royal throne;
people of all times will talk about you.

13 You yourself will now act and be merciful to the people of Jerusalem;
you will do this because it is now the time that you have set
for you to be kind to them.

14 It is true that we who serve you love everything about Jerusalem.

15 Yahweh, someday the people of all nations will revere you,
and all the kings on the earth will recognize how very glorious you are.

16 You see, it is Yahweh who builds Jerusalem;
he will appear **there** gloriously.

17 Yahweh listens to the prayers of **his** people who are homeless.
He does not ignore them

when they pray for him to help them.

18 I will write these things down
so that people in future years will know **what he has done**,
in order that people who are not born yet will praise Yahweh.

19 **They will describe** how Yahweh looked down from his holy place in heaven
and saw **what was happening on** the earth.

20 Yahweh looked down in order to help the groaning prisoners.
He looked down in order to set free the people whom their enemies were about to kill.

21 As a result, people in Jerusalem will tell what Yahweh has done and praise him for it.

22 This will happen when many peoples, including those from other kingdoms, gather to worship Yahweh together.

23 **But now** he has caused me to become weak while I am still young;
I think that I will not remain alive very long.

24 I say **to you**, "My God, do not let me die when I am only half-way through my lifetime!
In contrast, you live forever!

25 You created the world long ago,
and you are the one who made the heavens.

26 As for the earth and the heavens, they will disappear, but as for you, you will remain.
All of it will wear out as clothes wear out.
You will get rid of them as people get rid of old clothes,
and they will no longer exist.

27 But you are Yahweh;
you will always be.

28 The children of those who worship you will live safely **in Jerusalem**,
and you will protect their descendants as they live in your presence."

103

1 ***A psalm of David***

I tell myself, “Praise Yahweh!”

To everything that is within me, I say, “Praise him because he is holy!”

2 I tell myself, “Praise Yahweh,

and think about all of the kind things that he has done for me.”

3 He forgives all of my sins,

and he heals me from all of my sicknesses.

4 He rescues me from things that would kill me;

he blesses me by faithfully loving me and acting mercifully to me.

5 He gives me plenty of good things **during my entire life**.

He makes me feel young **and strong as though I could fly high** like an eagle.

6 It is Yahweh who does all this! He does what is right and judges justly for all those whom people have been treating unfairly.

7 **Long ago** he revealed to Moses the way that he works;

he showed to **our ancestors,** the people of Israel, the **mighty** things that he can do.

8 Yahweh acts mercifully and kindly;

he does not quickly get angry **when we sin**;

he always faithfully loves us.

9 He will not always rebuke us,

and he will not remain angry forever.

10 He does not punish us for our sins nearly as much as we deserve.

11 Indeed, as high as the sky is above the earth,

that is how much Yahweh faithfully loves everyone who reveres him.

12 He has taken away the guilt for our sins

and put it as far from us as the east is from the west.

13 Just as parents always love their children,

Yahweh always loves those who revere him.

14 Indeed, he certainly knows how weak we are;

he remembers that he created us from dust.

15 The lifetime of humans passes quickly, like that of grass.
We are like wild flowers that bloom for a short while,
16 but then the wind blows over them and they disappear,
and no one knows they were ever there.
17 But Yahweh will continue to faithfully love
all those who revere him, forever.
He will do what is right for generations of their children,
18 that is, he will act that way to all those who obey the covenant that he made with them.
Yes, he will act that way to all those who obey what he has commanded us to do.
19 Yahweh rules as king in heaven.
From there, he rules over everything.
20 Praise Yahweh, you angels who belong to Yahweh,
You powerful warriors who do what he tells you to do,
you who obey what he commands!
21 Praise Yahweh, all you armies of his angels,
you who serve him and do what he desires!
22 All of the creatures that Yahweh has created should praise him!
They should praise him in every place where he rules, **which is everywhere**!
I say to myself, "Praise Yahweh!"

104 1 I tell myself, "Bless Yahweh!"
Yahweh, my God, you are magnificent!
You are more majestic than a king appearing in his beautiful robes!
2 You use light **itself** as your robe;
you spread out **all of** heaven as your tent.
3 The rain clouds are like the upper rooms of your palace.
The clouds are like chariots for you;
the wind is like a bird that takes you wherever you want to go.
4 You send the winds like your messengers,

and you control fire as your servant.

5 You created the world to be secure,
so that nothing can ever move it from its place.

6 Later, you covered the earth with a flood, like covering someone with clothing;
water even covered the mountains.

7 Then you commanded the water, and it receded;
yes, you spoke loudly,
and the water rushed away.

8 Part of the water ascended to its place above the mountains,
and part of it descended the valleys to its place in the earth.
All of it went back to the place that you had determined for it.

9 Then you set a boundary for the water that it cannot cross over.
That boundary ensures that the water will never again cover the whole earth.

10 You make the springs that pour water into the stream beds;
their water flows between the mountains.

11 Those streams provide water for all of his wild animals to drink.
The wild donkeys drink the water and are no longer thirsty.

12 Birds make their nests beside the streams.
They sing among the branches of the trees.

13 From the heavens you send rain down on the mountains.
As a result of doing this, you satisfy all of the creatures on earth with many good things.

14 You make grass to grow for the cattle to eat,
and you make plants to grow for people to cultivate,
so that they can make bread from those plants that grew in the soil.

15 You give us grapes that produce wine that makes us cheerful;
you give us olives that produce oil to make our faces shine,
and you give us grain to make bread that makes us strong.

16 Yahweh, you send plenty of rain to water
your cedar trees that you planted in Lebanon.

17 Birds make their nests in those trees,

and storks make their nests in the cypress trees.

18 High up in the mountains is where the wild goats live,
and hyraxes live in the rocky cliffs.

19 Yahweh, you made the moon to indicate the times for our festivals,
and you made the sun to always go down at the right time.

20 You bring darkness, and it becomes night
when all of your forest animals prowl around.

21 The young lions roar then as they seek their prey,
looking for the food that you have provided for them.

22 At dawn, they go back to their dens and lie down.

23 **That is when** people go to their work;
and they do their work until it is evening.

24 Yahweh, you have made so many different kinds of things!
You were very wise as you made them all.
The earth is full of the creatures that you made.

25 We see the ocean, which is vastly wide between its shores!
It is full of many kinds of wriggling creatures,
so many that no one can count them.
There are creatures ranging from small to big.

26 Ships sail on the sea.
Leviathan is also there, the creature that you made to splash around in it.

27 All of these creatures depend on you
to give them the food that they need at the right time.

28 When you give them the food that they need,
then they gather it.
You give it to them freely.
They eat until they are full of your good things.

29 But when you refuse to give food to them,
they panic.
When you cause them to stop breathing, they die;
their bodies decay and become part of the soil.

30 When you cause **newborn** creatures to begin to breathe,
they begin to live.
You give new life to **all the living creatures on** the earth.
31 I want all of Yahweh's creatures to glorify him forever!
I want Yahweh to rejoice about everything that he has created!
32 He makes the earth shake just by looking at it!
When he **merely** touches the mountains they start to burn!
33 I will sing to Yahweh as long as I live.
I will praise my God until the day that I die.
34 May Yahweh be pleased by all **these things** that I have thought about him.
As for me, I will rejoice because I know him.
35 However, I want sinners to disappear from the earth,
and for there to be no more wicked people!
I tell myself, "Bless Yahweh!"
Praise Yahweh!

105 **1** Give thanks to Yahweh; worship him and pray to him.
Tell everyone in the world what he has done!
2 Sing to him; praise him with instruments;
tell others about all of his wonderful miracles!
3 Be proud of Yahweh, who is the holy one.
You people who worship Yahweh, rejoice!
4 Ask Yahweh to help you and to make you strong;
always try to be with him!
5-6 You people who are descendants of Yahweh's servant Abraham,
you descendants of Jacob, the people whom Yahweh has chosen,
think about all of the wonderful things that he has done;
he performed miracles, and he proclaimed **righteous** judgments.
7 He is Yahweh, the God whom we worship.
He rules over people throughout the earth.
8 He never forgets the covenant that he made;

that is, he will maintain what he promised for countless generations.

9 That is the covenant that he made with Abraham,
and that he repeated with an oath to Isaac.

10 Then he repeated it as a reliable covenant with Jacob,
that is, with Israel, and it was a covenant that would last forever.

11 What Yahweh said to them was, “I will give to you the region of Canaan;
that will be what you **and your descendants** inherit from me.”

12 Yahweh said that to the people of Israel when there were only a few of them.
They were just a tiny group of people who were living in that land like strangers.

13 They continually wandered from one place to another,
living in various kingdoms and people groups.

14 But Yahweh did not allow others to oppress the people of Israel.
On their behalf, he warned kings **by saying to them**,

15 “Do not harm the people whom I have chosen!
Do nothing bad to my prophets!”

16 Yahweh created a famine in the land of Canaan,
that is, all of the people there had no food to eat.

17 **So the people of Israel went to Egypt, but** before they went, Yahweh had already sent someone **there**.
He sent Joseph, whom his brothers had sold to be a slave.

18 **Later, while Joseph was in prison in Egypt,**
the guards trapped his feet in shackles,
and they put an iron collar around his neck.

19 **Joseph was in prison** until the time
when the events that he had predicted happened.
Yahweh spoke to him **during this time** and taught Joseph to trust him more.

20 The king of Egypt, the ruler of the people, commanded his servants
who went to the prison and set Joseph free.

21 Then the king chose Joseph as the one to decide about everything in the king’s household,

that is, to be in charge of everything that the king possessed.

22 The king permitted Joseph to command the king's officials
to do anything that Joseph wanted them to do,
and Joseph taught the king's advisors how to be wise.

23 **Later, Joseph's father** Jacob, also called Israel, arrived in Egypt.
He lived like a foreigner in that land that belonged to the descendants of Ham.

24 Over the years, Yahweh caused the descendants of Jacob to become very numerous.
As a result, the enemies of the people of Israel considered that the people of Israel were becoming too strong.

25 So Yahweh caused the rulers of Egypt to hate Yahweh's people,
and they devised ways to oppress his people.

26 But then Yahweh sent his servant Moses
along with **Moses' older brother** Aaron, whom Yahweh had also chosen **to serve him**.

27 Those two performed Yahweh's amazing miracles among the people of Egypt
in that land where the descendants of Ham lived.

28 Yahweh sent darkness so that the land of Egypt was dark,
and Moses and Aaron obeyed what Yahweh told them to do.

29 Yahweh caused all of the water in Egypt to become blood,
which caused all of their fish to die.

30 Then he caused the land to become full of frogs;
the royal family even had frogs in their bedrooms!

31 Then Yahweh commanded **that flies come**, and **swarms of** flies descended **on the people of Egypt**.
Gnats also swarmed across the whole country.

32 Yahweh sent them hail instead of rain,
and he started fires that burned throughout their land.

33 The hail ruined their grapevines, fig trees,
and destroyed all the other trees in their country.

34 Yahweh commanded locusts to come, and hordes of them came of different kinds;

so many came that no one could count them.

35 The locusts ate every green plant in their land,

including all of the crops.

36 Then Yahweh killed every firstborn son, the one who first demonstrated that the man was virile, **in every house** of the people of Egypt.

37 Then Yahweh brought the Israelite people out **from Egypt**.

They were carrying **many heavy things made of** silver and gold **that the people of Egypt had given to them**,

and yet none of his people stumbled as they went.

38 The people of Egypt were glad when the Israelite people left

because the people of Egypt had become very afraid of the Israelites.

39 **Then** Yahweh spread a cloud to cover the Israelites;

and at night **it became** a **big** fire **in the sky** to give them light.

40 **Then** the Israelites asked **for meat to eat**,

and Yahweh sent **flocks of** quail to them,

and he gave them plenty of **manna** bread from the sky **each morning**.

41 **One day** Yahweh split open a rock, and water poured out **from the opening for the people to drink**.

The water became a river flowing in the desert.

42 Yahweh did those things because he continually thought about the sacred promise that he had given to his servant, Abraham.

43 So his people were joyful as Yahweh brought them out **from Egypt**.

These people whom he had chosen were shouting joyfully as they went.

44 Then Yahweh gave to the people of Israel the land that had belonged to the people groups **that lived there in Canaan**.

So the Israelites took over the fields that those peoples had planted.

45 Yahweh did all these things

so that his people would do all the things that he had commanded them to do.

Praise Yahweh!

106

1 Praise Yahweh!

Thank Yahweh because he is good

and because he faithfully loves us forever!

2 Because Yahweh has done so many great things,

no one can tell all the great things that Yahweh has done,

and no one can praise him enough.

3 How happy are those who act fairly,

always doing what is right!

4 Yahweh, be kind to me when you help your people!

Include me when you rescue them!

5 Allow me to see the people whom you have chosen become prosperous again.

Allow me to be happy with the people of your nation when they become happy again.

Allow me to praise you along with all those others who belong to you.

6 We have sinned just as our ancestors did;

we have done all kinds of evil.

7 Our ancestors did not appreciate the wonderful things that you did when they were in Egypt.

They forgot about the many times that you showed that you faithfully loved them.

Instead, when they were at the Sea of Reeds,

they rebelled against you.

8 Even so, he rescued them because of who he is,

so that he could show that he is very powerful.

9 He rebuked the Sea of Reeds and it became dry.

Then he led our ancestors through it and even the deepest parts were as dry as a desert.

10 In that way he rescued them from their hateful enemies.

11 Then their enemies drowned under the water **of the Sea of Reeds**;

not one of them remained **alive**.

12 When that happened, our ancestors believed that Yahweh had truly done for them
what he had promised to do,
and they sang to praise him.
13 But they soon forgot what he had done for them;
they did things without waiting to find out what Yahweh wanted them to do.
14 They intensely wanted certain foods in the wilderness.
They did evil things there that challenged God to punish them.
15 So he gave them what they requested,
but then he made many of them sick so that they died.
16 Later when some of the men in the camp became resentful of Moses
and of **his older brother** Aaron, who was dedicated to serve Yahweh **by being a priest**,
17 the ground opened up and Dathan fell into it
and it also buried Abiram and his people.
18 God made a fire start among their people
that burned up all the wicked people **who agreed with them**.
19 Then the Israelite leaders made a metal statue of a calf at Mount Horeb
and they worshiped it.
20 So instead of worshiping their glorious God,
they worshiped a statue of a bull that eats grass!
21 They ignored God, who had rescued them by the great miracles that he
performed in Egypt.
22 They stopped thinking about the wonderful things that he did for them in Egypt
and the amazing things that he did for them at the Sea of Reeds.
23 Because of that, God said that he would get rid of the Israelites;
but Moses, whom God had chosen **to serve him**,
confronted God to persuade him not to destroy **them**.
24 Then our ancestors refused to enter the beautiful land **of Canaan**
because they did not believe that God would fulfill his promise **that he would enable them to take the land from the people who were living there**.
25 Instead, they stayed in their tents and complained.

They did not obey what Yahweh said that they should do.

26 So Yahweh solemnly swore to them
that he would cause them to die there in the wilderness,

27 and that he would spread their descendants among the people of other nations,
yes, that he would disperse them in those **foreign** lands.

28 Later the Israelite people began worshiping the statue of Baal at Mount Peor,
and they ate meat that had been sacrificed to dead **ancestors**.

29 When the people did these things, that made Yahweh angry,
so **again** he caused many of them to get a terrible disease.

30 But Phinehas stood up and punished **the ones who had sinned**,
and as a result the plague ended.

31 Because of what Phinehas did, people have considered him to be a righteous man,
and people in all future years will continue to remember him as righteous.

32 Then at Meribah, where the water came out **of the rock**, our ancestors caused Yahweh to become angry **again**,
and Moses suffered because of what they did.

33 Moses suffered because they caused him to become very angry,
and he said things that were foolish.

34 Our ancestors did not destroy the other people groups
as Yahweh had told them to do.

35 Instead, the men married women from those people groups,
and they started doing the **evil** things that those people did.

36 Our ancestors worshiped the idols of those people,
and that is how they began to reject Yahweh and his ways.

37 **Many of** the Israelites sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons **that those idols represented**.

38 They killed their own sons and daughters, who had done nothing wrong,
by offering them as sacrifices to the idols of the Canaanites.
Because of those murders, the land of Canaan became defiled.

39 Because of what they did they made it impossible for Yahweh to accept them.
By worshiping idols instead of faithfully worshiping only Yahweh,
they became like prostitutes.
40 So Yahweh became very angry with his people;
he was completely disgusted with them.
41 As a result, he allowed other people groups to conquer our ancestors,
so that those who hated our ancestors were their rulers.
42 Their enemies oppressed our ancestors
and completely controlled them.
43 Many times Yahweh saved his people,
but they insisted on rebelling against him,
and they destroyed themselves by being more and more sinful.
44 However, Yahweh saw everything that was distressing to them,
and he listened to them when they cried out to him for help.
45 He thought about the covenant that he had made with them,
and because he was completely committed to faithfully loving them,
he decided that he would stop **punishing them**.
46 He caused all those who had captured the Israelites to feel sorry for them.
47 Yahweh our God, rescue us
and bring us back to Israel from among those other people groups
so that we may thank you who are holy
and joyfully praise you!
48 Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship!
Praise him now and forever!
Let all the people say, “We agree!
Praise Yahweh!”

Book Five

107

1 Thank Yahweh because he is good
and because he faithfully loves us forever!

2 Those whom Yahweh has saved should tell others
that he has rescued them from their enemies.
3 He has gathered them together from **many foreign** lands;
he has gathered them from the east and the west,
from the north and from the **southern** sea.
4 Some of those who returned from those countries wandered in the trackless desert;
they could find no town to live in.
5 They were hungry and thirsty,
and they became weak and discouraged.
6 Then because they were distressed, they called out to Yahweh,
and he rescued them from what was distressing them.
7 He led them along a straight road where they walked **safely**
to cities where they could live.
8 They should praise Yahweh for how he has loved them faithfully
and for the wonderful things that he does for all people!
9 They should thank him because he satisfies people who are thirsty,
and he gives hungry people plenty of good food to eat.
10 Some of them sat in deep darkness;
they were prisoners, suffering in iron **chains fastened to their hands and feet**.
11 They were suffering in prison because they had rebelled against God;
they actually rejected the instructions that the Most High God gave to them.
12 God made them experience difficult things so that they would no longer be proud.
When bad things happened to them, there was no one who would help them.
13 Then because they were so distressed, they called out to Yahweh,
and he rescued them from what was distressing them.
14 He broke the chains that were on their hands and feet
and brought them out of those very dark prisons.
15-16 Yahweh broke down the bronze gates
and he cut through the iron bars of their prison.

Therefore they should praise Yahweh for how he has loved them faithfully
and for the wonderful things that he does for all people!
17 Some of them foolishly rebelled against God,
and they suffered because of their sins.
18 They did not want to eat any food,
and they almost died.
19 Then because they were so distressed, they called out to Yahweh,
and he rescued them from what was distressing them.
20 Then Yahweh healed them by speaking a message of healing;
in this way he saved them from dying.
21 They should praise Yahweh for how he has loved them faithfully
and for the wonderful things that he does for all people!
22 They should give offerings to him to show that they are thankful,
and they should tell about the miracles that he has performed by singing joyfully!
23 Some of them sailed in ships;
they bought and sold things far away across the sea.
24 These people saw the creatures that Yahweh created;
they saw the amazing things that he had made as they traveled across the very deep seas.
25 Then he commanded the winds to become strong.
They became a storm and stirred up very high waves.
26 The ships in which they were sailing went up on the high waves,
then they went down into the troughs between the waves.
This dangerous action terrified the sailors.
27 They stumbled about and staggered as drunken men do,
and everything that they tried to do was useless.
28 Then because they were distressed, they called out to Yahweh,
and he rescued them from what was distressing them.
29 He calmed the storm
and he stilled the waves.

30 Then they were very glad that the storm had become calm
and Yahweh brought them **safely** into the harbor where they had wanted to go.
31 They should praise Yahweh for how he has loved them faithfully
and for the wonderful things that he does for all people!
32 They should praise him among the Israelite people when they have gathered together,
and they should praise him in front of the leaders of the community.
33 Yahweh causes rivers to become dry
so that the land becomes barren,
and he makes springs of water to become dusty ground.
34 Yahweh causes land that normally produces a lot of crops to become salty wastelands.
He does that because the people who live there are very wicked.
35 But Yahweh also creates pools of water in deserts,
that is, he causes springs to flow where the ground had been dry.
36 Then he brings people who are hungry into that land,
to live there and to build cities there.
37 Then they sow **some of** the fields with seeds
and **in other fields** they plant grapevines
and it all produces **a large amount of** crops.
38 He blesses those people so that they have very many children,
and so that their herds of cattle become very large.
39 Then the people become fewer because the leaders oppress them
and cause them to become distressed and to suffer.
40 Then Yahweh shows that he despises the leaders **who oppress them**,
and makes those leaders wander in a wilderness where there are no roads.
41 But he rescues poor people from those who oppress them
and causes **their** families to increase in number as flocks of sheep do.
42 People who live rightly see **Yahweh do these things**, and they rejoice;
wicked people **know about these things, too,**

but they have nothing to say in reply.

43 Those who are wise should think carefully about these things;
they should thoughtfully consider all the things that Yahweh has done to show that he faithfully loves them.

108

David wrote this psalm. It is a song.

1 God, I am completely committed to worshiping you.
I will sing and I will play music to praise you.
I will do this with my whole being!

2 I will arise before the sun rises,
and I will praise you while I play my lyre and my harp.

3 Yahweh, I will thank you as foreign people listen;
yes, I will play music to praise you before other people groups.

4 I will do that because the way that you faithfully love us is so great that it is like the distance between the heavens and the earth,
and the way that you faithfully keep your promises is so great that it is like the distance between the earth and the clouds.

5 God, show all creatures that you are greater than anything in the heavens!
Show how wonderful you are to people all over the earth!

6 Please answer our prayers and rescue us from our enemies by your power
so that we, the people whom you love, may be safe.

7 Because God is holy, he answered, "I will joyfully divide the area of Shechem for you
and I will distribute among my people the land in the Valley of Succoth.

8 The region of Gilead is mine;
the area of the tribe of Manasseh is mine;
the tribe of Ephraim is like my war helmet;
and the tribe of Judah is like my royal scepter.

9 The people of Moab serve me as those who wash my feet;
the people of Edom also belong to me as menial servants;
I have defeated the people of Philistia."

10 I wait for God to lead us to **fight against the people of** Edom;

I wait for God to lead my army to **attack** their **capital** city that has strong walls around it.

11 God, we hope that you have not abandoned us;

we are distressed that you have not been going with us when our army marches out **to fight our enemies**.

12 Please help us when we fight against our enemies

because the help that humans can give **to us** is worthless.

13 **But** with you **helping us**, we will win;

you are the one who will **enable us to** defeat our enemies.

109

1 ***A note to the worship leader: David wrote this psalm.***

God, you are the one whom I praise,

so please answer my prayer

2 because evil and dishonest people slander me

and tell lies about me.

3 On all sides of me they say things that show that they hate me,

and they harm me for no reason.

4 I show them that I love them

but instead of being kind to me, they say that I have done evil things.

So I pray to God **about it**.

5 I do good things for them and they respond by doing evil things to me.

I love them and they respond by hating me.

6 So appoint a wicked judge who will judge my enemy,

and bring one **of his enemies** who will stand next to him and accuse him **of doing evil things**.

7 Let that judge declare that my enemy is guilty,

and may you judge that even his prayer **to you** is a sin.

8 Then cause him to die soon;

let people honor someone else rather than him.

9 Cause his children not to have a father anymore,

and cause his wife to become a widow.

10 Cause his children to wander far from their ruined homes,
begging and looking for food.

11 Let the people to whom he owed money seize all of his property;
let strangers take away everything that he worked to acquire.

12 Make sure that no one is faithfully loving to him;
make sure that no one pities his fatherless children.

13 Cause all his children to die,
so that there will not be another generation to continue his name.

14 Yahweh, consider all of the evil things that his ancestors did
and do not forgive the sins that his mother committed.

15 Please think about their sins always,
but cause everyone on earth to completely forget who they were.

16 I pray these things because that man, **my enemy,** was never faithful toward anyone as your covenant says we must be;
instead, he persecuted poor, needy, and grieving people
until they were dead.

17 He enjoyed cursing **other people**,
so now people are cursing him.
He did not want to bless **other people**,
so there will be no one who blesses him.

18 Cursing **other people** is as natural for him as wearing clothes.
Cursing **other people** is so much a part of who he is that it is like the water that he drinks;
it is so much a part of who he is that it is like olive oil that has soaked into his bones.

19 Cause those terrible curses to continually afflict him like clothes that cling to him
and like the belt that he wears every day.

20 Yahweh, let this **curse** be the way that you punish all of those who accuse me **of doing bad things**
and all of those who say evil things about me.

21 But you, Yahweh, my God, please be kind to me
because of who you are!
Rescue me **from my enemies**
because you faithfully love me as you promised.
22 I ask you to do this because I am destitute
and I am intensely sorrowful.
23 I think that my time to remain alive will end
as quickly as an evening shadow disappears.
I will be gone as quickly as a man shakes off a locust.
24 My knees are weak because I have fasted very often,
and my body has become very thin; any fat is gone.
25 The people who accuse me despise me;
when they see me, they insult me by shaking their heads at me.
26 Yahweh, the God whom I worship, please help me!
Rescue me because you faithfully love me!
27 Then my enemies will know
that you, Yahweh, are the one who has done it!
28 As for them, they will curse **me**, but you, in contrast, will bless **me**.
When they persecute **me**, **the result will be that** you make them ashamed,
but you cause **me,** your servant, to be glad!
29 Please let everyone see that those who accuse me are completely disgraceful!
Yes, cause other people to see that they are shameful as easily as someone sees the clothes that they wear!
30 I will thank Yahweh very much out loud;
I will praise him when I am among the crowd of people who are worshiping him.
31 I will do that because he defends poor people **like me**
in order to save **us** from those who would condemn us to die.

110

1 ***David wrote this psalm.***
Yahweh said to my lord,

"Sit here, close to me, in the place of highest honor
until I completely defeat your enemies
and make them like a stool for your feet!"

2 Yahweh will extend your powerful kingdom
from Zion to other lands;
you are to rule over all your enemies.

3 When you lead your army into battle,
your people will offer themselves freely to join your army.
The way that they are completely devoted to you will be beautiful.
You will be as strong as you were as a young man every day,
as surely as the dew comes that waters the earth every morning.

4 Yahweh has made a solemn promise
and he will never change his mind about it;
he said to the king, "You are an eternal priest
in the way that Melchizedek was a priest."

5 The Lord fights for you;
when he becomes angry, he defeats many kings.

6 He will punish the people of many nations;
he will cause many enemy soldiers to fall dead, with crushed heads,
all over a broad land.

7 But the king will drink from the stream alongside the road;
because of all this, he will be victorious.

111

1 Praise Yahweh!
I will thank Yahweh with my entire inner being
every time that those who do what is right meet together.

2 The things that Yahweh does are wonderful!
All those who delight in those things study them carefully.

3 The things that he does show how wonderful and glorious he is,
and that he is eternally righteous.

4 He has done wonderful things that people will always remember;

Yahweh always acts kindly and mercifully.

5 He provides food for those who profoundly respect him;

he never forgets the covenant that he made **with our ancestors**.

6 By enabling his people to capture the lands that had belonged to other people groups,

he showed to **us,** his people, that he is very powerful.

7 He does everything fairly and in the right way,

and we can trust that everything that he tells us to do is for our good.

8 We must obey his instructions forever;

he created them in order to do what is best for us, and they are completely right.

9 He rescued us, his people, **from being slaves in Egypt,**

and he made a covenant **with us** that will last forever.

He is holy and awesome!

10 Having a profound respect for Yahweh is the way to become wise.

All those who obey his instructions will come to understand why it is good to do them.

We should praise him forever!

112

1 Praise Yahweh!

How fortunate are those who have a profound respect for Yahweh;

How fortunate are those who happily obey his commands!

2 Their descendants will prosper in their land;

Yahweh will bless all who do what is right.

3 Their families will be wealthy,

and their righteous deeds will endure forever.

4 For those who honor God, it is as if a light were shining on them in the darkness,

on those who are kind, merciful, and righteous.

5 It is good to be kind to others and to generously lend money to them.

A person like that does everything honestly.

6 Righteous people do this because they know that bad things will never overwhelm them;

other people will always joyfully remember them.

7 Righteous people are not afraid when they receive bad news;
they confidently trust in Yahweh.

8 They are confident and not afraid
because they know that they will see God defeat their enemies.

9 They give things generously to poor people;
their kind deeds will endure forever;
people will greatly honor them.

10 Wicked people will see those things and become angry;
they will gnash their teeth angrily,
then people will stop hearing from them and they will die.
The wicked things that they want to do will never happen.

113 1 Praise Yahweh!
You people who serve Yahweh, praise him!
Praise Yahweh for who he is!

2 Everyone should praise Yahweh for who he is, both now and forevermore!

3 From the people who live in the far east to the people who live in the far west,
everyone should praise Yahweh for who he is!

4 Yahweh rules over all the nations,
he is more glorious than anything under the heavens.

5 There is no one who is like Yahweh, the God whom we worship,
who sits on his throne in the highest heaven

6 and who stoops down to look at the sky and at the earth.

7 He rescues very poor people from the very poor way that they live

8 and causes people to honor them by making them
leaders among those who rule his people.

9 He also enables women who have had no children to live in their houses
as happy mothers with children.
Praise Yahweh!

114 1 When the Israelite people left Egypt,

yes, when the descendants of Jacob left those people who spoke a foreign language,

2 the land of Judah became the place where people worshiped God;

and the land of Israel became the area that he ruled over.

3 **When they came to** the Sea **of Reeds**,

it was as though the water saw **them** and ran away!

When they came to the Jordan River,

the water in the river stopped flowing **so that the Israelites could cross it**.

4 **When Mount Sinai shook,**

it was as though the mountains skipped like rams

and the hills jumped like lambs.

5 **If someone asks,** "What happened at the Sea **of Reeds** that made it seem to run away?

What happened that caused **the water in** the Jordan **River** to stop flowing?

6 **What happened at Mount Sinai that made the** mountains **seem to** skip like rams

and made the hills **seem to** jump like lambs?"

7 **I would reply,** "The earth trembles because the Lord is there!

Everyone should tremble because of the presence of the God whom Jacob worshiped!"

8 He is the one who caused pools of water to flow from a rock **for the Israelite people to drink**;

indeed, he caused a spring to flow from a solid rock!

115 *A psalm written by David*

1 Yahweh, **we ask** not so people will honor us, no, not that at all;

rather, we want people to honor you alone

because of seeing how you faithfully love us and by seeing you do what you have promised to do.

2 It is not right that other people groups should say **about us**,

"We do not see their God doing anything **to help them**."

3 Well, the God whom we worship lives in heaven;

he does whatever he wants!

4 But the idols of those people groups are only silver and gold **statues**;
humans made them.

5 Their idols have mouths, but they cannot say anything;
they have eyes, but they cannot see anything.

6 They have ears, but they cannot hear anything;
they have noses, but they cannot smell anything.

7 They have hands, but they cannot feel anything;
they have feet, but they cannot walk;
they cannot even make any sounds in their throats!

8 The people who make those idols are **as powerless** as those idols,
Everyone who trusts in those idols **to do anything** is also **powerless**!

9 You, my fellow Israelite people, trust in Yahweh!
He is the one who helps you and protects you like a shield.

10 You **priests, the** descendants of Aaron, trust in Yahweh!
He is the one who helps you and protects you like a shield.

11 All you who deeply respect Yahweh, trust in Yahweh!
He is the one who helps you and protects you like a shield.

12 Yahweh has not forgotten us; he will bless **us**.
he will bless us Israelite people!
He will bless the priests!

13 Yahweh will bless all those who deeply respect him—
those who are less important as well as the important people, that is, each one!

14 I pray that Yahweh may give **many children**
both to you, **my fellow Israelite people,** and to your children **after you**.

15 I pray that Yahweh, the one who made heaven and the earth, may bless all of you!

16 The highest heavens belong to Yahweh,
but he gave everything that is on the earth to humankind.

17 People who are dead are not able to praise Yahweh;

when they go to the place where dead people are,
they become silent and cannot praise him.
18 But we who are alive will praise Yahweh,
both now and forevermore.
Praise Yahweh!

116 1 I love Yahweh
because he hears me when I cry out for him to help me.
2 I love him because he listens to me,
so I will call out to him all during my life.
3 Everything around me caused me to think that I was about to die;
it seemed to me that I was already dying.
I was distressed and very sad.
4 But then I called out to Yahweh.
I said, "Yahweh, I plead with you to save me!"
5 Yahweh is kind and does what is right.
He is the God whom we worship, and he loves us.
6 Yahweh protects those who are helpless;
when I was experiencing bad things, he saved me.
7 I encourage myself to relax once again
because Yahweh has restored me.
8 Indeed, Yahweh has saved me from dying,
he has delivered me from being sorrowful,
and he has kept me from making bad mistakes.
9 So while I am still alive,
I will live as Yahweh directs me.
10 I continued to trust in Yahweh,
even when I said, "As for me, I am greatly suffering."
11 For my part, I was so distressed that I thought,
"I cannot trust anyone."
12 I can never repay Yahweh

for all the good things that he has done for me.

13 **But I can do this:** I will present a cup **of wine as a thank offering**
as I call out to thank him for saving me.

14 Also, as the people who belong to Yahweh watch,
I will give to him the offerings that I solemnly promised to give to him.

15 Yahweh is very grieved when one of his people dies.

16 Certainly I am one of Yahweh's people;
I am his servant; I have belonged to him since my mother bore me.
So he saved me from what was going to kill me.

17 So I will offer to him a sacrifice to thank him,
and I will pray to Yahweh.

18-19 As the people who belong to Yahweh watch,
in the courtyard outside his temple,
in the middle of Jerusalem,
I will give to him the offerings that I solemnly promised to give to him.
Praise Yahweh!

117

1 You people of all nations, praise Yahweh!
All you people groups, greatly praise him!

2 Do this, because he is fully committed to love us faithfully, just as he promised to do,
and we can trust that Yahweh will be faithful forever.
Praise Yahweh!

118

1 Thank Yahweh because he is good
and because he faithfully loves us forever!

2 All Israelite people should repeatedly shout,
"because he faithfully loves us forever!"

3 You **priests** who are descendants of Aaron should repeatedly shout,
"because he faithfully loves us forever!"

4 All you who deeply revere Yahweh should repeatedly shout,
"because he faithfully loves us forever!"

5 When I was distressed, I called out to Yahweh,
and Yahweh answered me and set me free.
6 Yahweh is on my side,
so I will not be afraid of anything.
I know that humans cannot really harm me!
7 Yes, Yahweh is on my side. He helps me defeat my enemies,
so I know that I will look **triumphantly** on them.
8 It is better to rely on Yahweh
than to depend on people.
9 It is better to rely on Yahweh
than to trust that influential people will protect us.
10 Armies of many nations surrounded me,
but Yahweh powerfully enabled me to make them retreat.
11 They completely surrounded me,
but Yahweh powerfully enabled me to make them retreat.
12 They swarmed around me like **angry** bees,
but they diminished as quickly as a fire that is burning only thorns;
Yahweh powerfully enabled me to make them retreat.
13 My enemies attacked me fiercely and thought that they would defeat me,
but Yahweh helped me.
14 Yahweh is the one who makes me strong,
and who gives me a reason to sing;
and he saves me from my enemies.
15 Listen to the joyful songs of how Yahweh saves people!
They come from the tents of the people who honor God!
They sing, "Yahweh has powerfully defeated our enemies;
16 Yahweh has shown himself to be victorious!
Yahweh has powerfully defeated our enemies!"
17 My enemies will not kill me;
no, I will live to proclaim the great things that Yahweh has done.
18 Yahweh has punished me severely,

but he has not allowed me to die.

19 **You gatekeepers,** open for me the gates through which those who obey Yahweh may enter,

so that I may enter through them and thank Yahweh.

20 **The gatekeeper says,** "This is Yahweh's gate;

all who obey him may enter through it."

21 **Yahweh,** I thank you that you answered my prayer

and saved me **from my enemies**.

22 **People considered me worthless, like** a stone that builders rejected,

but then Yahweh showed that he highly values me,

as if that stone then became the most important stone in the building.

23 The people said, "Yahweh made that happen,

and for us, it is a wonderful thing.

24 Yahweh made possible everything that we are celebrating today;

we should be extremely happy about all of it!

25 Yahweh, we plead with you to keep rescuing us **from our enemies**.

Yahweh, please continue to help us to succeed **against our enemies**.

26 Yahweh, bless the one who will come with your power.

From the temple we bless all of you.

27 Yahweh is God,

and he has made us victorious.

Bring an animal sacrifice **for him** and tie it to the horns of the altar."

28 Yahweh, you are the God whom I worship, and I will praise you!

You are the only God whom I worship, and I will tell everyone that you are great!

29 Thank Yahweh because he is good

and because he faithfully loves us forever!

119 ALEPH

1 How fortunate are those about whom no one can say truthfully that they have done things that are wrong!
Those are the people who always obey Yahweh's instructions.
2 How fortunate are those who do what he tells them to do!
Those are the people who sincerely want to know him.
3 They certainly do not want to cheat other people;
they live in a way that pleases Yahweh.
4 Yahweh, you have given us your instructions
so that we would carefully obey them.
5 I want very much to continually obey everything that you command!
6 If I did that, then I would not be ashamed
when I think about everything that you command.
7 As I learn all of your just regulations,
I thank you sincerely.
8 I will obey your regulations;
do not desert me!

BETH

9 I know how a young person can live in the right way;
it is by obeying your commands.
10 I eagerly want to please you.
Do not allow me to disobey what you have commanded.
11 I have memorized your commands
in order to not sin against you.
12 Yahweh, I praise you;
teach me your rules.
13 I have proclaimed to the people all of the things that you have commanded us to do.
14 I delight in obeying your instructions;
I enjoy that more than being very rich.

15 I will carefully think about everything that you have commanded me,
yes, I will pay attention to the way of living that you have taught me.
16 I am happy to obey your decrees;
I will not forget what you have said.

GIMEL

17 Do good things for me, the one who serves you,
in order that I may continue to live and obey you.
18 Help me to understand
how wonderful your instructions are.
19 I am living here on the earth for only a short time;
please let me know your instructions.
20 I am weak from constantly desiring to know your instructions.
21 You rebuke people who are proud;
you curse people who disobey your commands.
22 Do not allow them to continue to insult and scorn me;
I request this because I have obeyed what you have required.
23 Rulers gather together and plan ways to harm me,
but I, your servant, will meditate on what you have commanded me.
24 Yes, I am delighted with your requirements;
they are like **good** advisors for me.

DALETH

25 **Sometimes** I feel like I will soon die;
allow me to live as you have told me that you would do.
26 When I told you about what was happening with me, you responded to me;
teach me the things that you want me to do.
27 Help me to understand how you want me to behave,
and then I can think about how amazing your instructions are.

28 I am very sad, with the result that I am becoming weak;
enable me to be strong again through a message from you.
29 Prevent me from telling lies,
and be kind to me by teaching me your instructions.
30 I have decided that I will faithfully obey you;
I know that what you say is right.
31 Yahweh, I try to carefully obey what you say;
please do not allow me to do anything shameful.
32 I eagerly obey your instructions
because you help me increasingly to understand **how they benefit me**.

HE

33 Yahweh, teach me what your regulations mean,
and then I will always obey them.
34 Help me to understand your instructions
so that I may eagerly obey them.
35 I am happy to do the things that you command,
so teach me the best way to obey them.
36 Cause me to want to do what you say
rather than to want to get things **that belong to other people**.
37 Do not allow me to desire things that are not good for me;
make me able to live as you want me to live.
38 Please do what you promised to do for me, your servant.
Your promises are what cause people to deeply revere you.
39 I become afraid when my enemies insult me **for obeying you**;
so please stop them,
because it is good to do what you tell us to do.
40 Indeed, I very much desire to obey what you have declared that we should do!
Because you are righteous, please make me joyful again in living **for you**.

WAW

41 Then I will know that you faithfully love me, Yahweh;
and that you will save me as you promised that you would do.
42 After you do that, I will be able to reply to those who insult me
because I trust what you have said.
43 Please do allow me to truthfully tell **them how you saved me**;
you see, I am patiently waiting for you to act justly.
44 I will consistently obey your instructions,
for as long as I live.
45 I will live freely and safely
because I **always** try to obey your regulations.
46 I will tell kings the things that you have said;
I will not be ashamed **to do so**.
47 I am very happy to obey the things that you command me to do;
I love to do them.
48 I eagerly ask to receive more of your commandments.
I love them,
and I will think deeply about everything that you require us to do.

ZAYIN

49 Please do what you said you would do for me, the one who serves you,
because what you have said has caused me to confidently expect good things from you.
50 When I am suffering, your promise to me comforts me;
knowing that you will do what you have said makes me joyful again in living **for you**.
51 Proud people are always making fun of me,
but I do not stop obeying your instructions.
52 Yahweh, I think about your regulations that you gave to us long ago.

Doing that comforts me.

53 When I see wicked people disregard your instructions,
I become very angry.

54 During this short time that I am living here on the earth,
the regulations that you have given to us are like music to me.

55 Yahweh, **even** during the night I think about you,
so that I **always** obey your instructions.

56 This is what I do;
I obey your regulations.

HETH

57 Yahweh, you have granted to me that I would belong to you,
and I promise to obey what you tell me to do.

58 I earnestly plead with you **to be good to me**;
act kindly to me as you promised that you would do.

59 I think about my behavior,
and **when it is wrong,** I once again obey what you tell me to do.

60 **When I understand** your instructions,
I do them immediately.

61 Wicked people try to make me do bad things,
but I continue to obey your instructions.

62 In the middle of the night I get up,
in order to praise you
because everything that you say is completely right.

63 I am a friend of all those who deeply revere you,
yes, to all those who obey what you tell us to do.

64 Yahweh, you faithfully love people all over the earth;
please **continue to** teach me how you want people to live.

TETH

65 Yahweh, you have done good things for me, your servant,
just as you promised that you would do.
66 Teach me to understand **what is happening around me** and to think carefully **before I decide what to do**,
because I believe that the best way to live is to obey what you tell us to do.
67 Before you afflicted me, I did things that were wrong,
but now I obey what you say to do.
68 You are good, and what you do is good;
teach me the **good** things that you have told us to do.
69 Proud people tell many lies about me,
but as for me, I enthusiastically obey what you have told us to do.
70 Those people are stupid,
but as for me, I happily obey your instructions.
71 It was good for me that you afflicted me
because the result was that I learned **how good** your regulations **are**.
72 The instructions that you give **to us** are beneficial to me.
They are more beneficial than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.

YODH

73 You created me and made me who I am;
please help me to be wise so that I may learn **to obey** what you tell me to do.
74 I want everyone who deeply reveres you to see **what you have done for** me.
Then they will be glad, because they will see **how good it is** that I have trusted you to do what you said.
75 Yahweh, I know that when you judge people, you are always right.
I know that you have made me suffer only because you faithfully love me.
76 Please comfort me by showing that you faithfully love me
as you said to me, your servant, that you would do.
77 I want you to act mercifully to me in order that I may continue to live,
because I am delighted with your instruction.

78 Cause the proud people who falsely accuse me to be ashamed;
but as for me, I will continue meditating on what you have commanded that I should do.
79 Cause those who deeply revere you to come to me
in order that they may learn what you say to us.
80 Enable me to want to perfectly obey your regulations
in order that I may not be ashamed **because of not doing that**.

KAPH

81 I desperately long for you to save me **from my enemies**,
but I will wait, knowing that you will answer **my prayer**.
82 My eyes are tired from watching for you to do what you promised that you would do,
and I ask, "When will you help me?"
83 Indeed, I feel as **weak and useless as** a wineskin that is **shriveled up from** hanging **a long time** in the smoke,
but I have not forgotten your regulations.
84 I, your servant, cannot wait any longer!
I want you to punish those who persecute me soon!
85 It is as though my proud enemies have dug deep pits for me **to fall into**.
These people disobey your instructions **to us**.
86 Everything that you tell us to do is truly good **for us**;
but people are persecuting me by telling lies **about me**, so please help me!
87 Those people have come very close to killing me,
but as for me, I have not stopped obeying what you have told us to do.
88 Because you faithfully love **me**, allow me to **continue to** live
so that I may **continue to** obey what you have instructed **us to do**.

LAMEDH

89 Yahweh, what you have proclaimed is eternal;
it exists forever in heaven.
90 You will continue to act faithfully for people of every generation;
you have put the earth in its place, and it remains firmly **there**.
91 To this day, all things on the earth remain because you decided that they should remain;
that is because everything on the earth serves you.
92 If I had not been delighted to obey your instructions,
then I would have died because of what I was suffering.
93 I will always remember what you have declared that we should do.
I obeyed those things, and as a result, you have enabled me to continue to live.
94 I belong to you; please save me from my enemies
because I intentionally obey what you have declared that we should do.
95 Wicked men are waiting to ambush and kill me,
but I think about what you have instructed **us to do**.
96 I have learned that there is a limit to **even** the best **that people can achieve**,
but what you decree is limitless.

MEM

97 I love your instructions very much!
I meditate on them throughout the day.
98 Because I know what you have told us to do
and because I think about those things all the time,
I have become wiser than my enemies.
99 I understand more than any of my teachers do
because I continually think about everything that you tell **us**.
100 I behave more intelligently than many old people do
because I obey what you have declared that we should do.
101 I have avoided all evil behavior

in order that I may obey what you have told us to do.

102 I have not stopped obeying your regulations
because you are the one who taught **them** to me.

103 When I read your words,
it is like eating something sweet;
yes, it is even better than eating honey!

104 Because I have learned what you have declared that we should do,
I am able to understand **many things**;
therefore, I hate all evil activities.

NUN

105 Your instruction is like a lamp that guides me;
yes, it is like a light that shows me where to walk.

106 I have solemnly promised, and I am solemnly promising it again,
that I will always obey your regulations;
they are always right.

107 Yahweh, I am suffering very much;
cause me to be strong again as you have promised to do.

108 Yahweh, sometimes the sacrifices that I offer to you are just my prayers to thank and praise you.
Please accept them,
and teach me the things that you tell us to do.

109 My enemies are constantly trying to kill me,
but I do not forget your instructions.

110 Wicked people have tried to seize me **as a hunter tries to catch little animals** with a trap,
but I have not disobeyed what you declared that we should do.

111 You have given me your instructions and they are mine forever;
Indeed, they are what make me joyful.

112 I have determined that I will always obey your commands as long as I live, to the very end.

SAMEKH

113 I hate people who cannot decide what to commit to,
but I love your instructions.
114 You are like a place where I can hide **from my enemies**,
and you are like a shield **behind which I am protected from them**;
I will wait, knowing that you will answer **my prayer**.
115 You people who do evil things, go away from me
so that I may obey what my God has commanded!
116 Please enable me to be strong as you promised that you would do,
in order that I may **continue to** live.
I am confidently expecting **that you will restore me**;
please do not disappoint me.
117 Please take care of me so that I can be safe
and so that I can always pay attention to what you have decreed that we should do.
118 You despise everyone who disregards what you have decreed that we should do;
indeed, they deceive others by lying.
119 You get rid of all the wicked people on the earth as **people get rid of** trash;
therefore, I love what you say to us.
120 I tremble because I am afraid of you;
I am afraid **because you punish those who do not obey** the rules that you have given to us.

AYIN

121 But I have done what is right and fair;
so please do not allow people to oppress me.

122 Please ensure that good things will happen for me, your servant,
and do not allow proud people to oppress me.
123 My eyes are tired from watching for you to save me,
yes, from watching for you to do what is right, as you promised to do.
124 Please do **things** for me, your servant, to show that you faithfully love me,
and teach me how to do what you have decreed that we should do.
125 I am one who serves you;
please enable me to understand **what you want me to know**
in order that I may learn what you have instructed us to do.
126 Yahweh, you should punish **people** now
because they have disobeyed your laws.
127 Because **I do not want to be like those people,** I love your instructions more than I love gold;
I love them more than I love very pure gold.
128 So I am careful to obey everything that you have declared that we should do,
and I hate all of the evil things that people do.

PE

129 All the things that you have instructed us to do are wonderful,
so I obey them enthusiastically.
130 When someone explains what you have said **to us**,
it is as though he is opening a door to a bright light **that allows people to see what they did not see before**;
what he says causes **even** people who have not studied your instructions to be wise.
131 I eagerly desire to know what you have commanded **us**,
as eagerly as though I were panting **for food and water**.
132 Pay attention to me and act kindly to me
as is right **for you to do** for **all** those who love you.
133 Please guide me by your instructions;

do not allow me to desire to do sinful things more than to obey you.

134 Rescue me from the people who oppress me
so that I may obey what you have declared that we should do.

135 Please act kindly toward me, your servant,
and teach me what you have decreed that we should do.

136 I cry very much
because many people do not obey your instructions.

TSADHE

137 Yahweh, you are righteous
and the rules that you have given to us are just.

138 All of the things that you have instructed us to do are absolutely right
and exactly what we need.

139 I am furious
because my enemies disregard what you have told us to do.

140 All of the things that you have said are perfectly dependable,
and I, your servant, love them.

141 I am not important, and people despise me,
but I do not forget what you have declared that we should do.

142 You are righteous and you will be righteous forever,
and your instructions are completely reliable.

143 I am constantly stressed and anxious,
but what you have commanded **us** causes me to rejoice.

144 All of the things that you have instructed us to do are always right;
help me to understand them in order that I may **continue to** live.

QOPH

145 Yahweh, fervently I call out to you; please answer me!
I fully intend to obey what you have decreed that we should do.

146 I call out to you, “Save me,
in order that I may obey the things that you have instructed us to do.”
147 **Each morning** I arise before dawn and call to you to help me;
I confidently wait for you to do what you have promised to do.
148 All during the night I am awake,
so that I can think about what you have said **to us**.
149 Yahweh, because you faithfully love me,
please listen to me **while I pray**;
because you do what is right, make me joyful again in living **for you**.
150 People who intend to harm me are approaching me;
they completely disregard your instructions.
151 But Yahweh, you are near to me,
and **I know that** what you command is completely right.
152 Long ago, I learned from what you have said
that you established your commandments to last forever.

RESH

153 Please acknowledge that I am suffering, and save me **from it**,
because I continually obey your instructions.
154 Defend me **when others accuse me** and rescue me **from them**;
allow me **to continue** to live as you promised that you would do.
155 Wicked people do not obey what you have decreed that we should do,
so you will certainly not save them.
156 Yahweh, you are constantly being merciful **to me** in many ways;
because you always do what is right, please allow me **to continue** to live.
157 Many people cause me to suffer,
but I continue to obey what you have instructed us to do.
158 When I look at those who are not faithful to you, I feel disgust
because they do not obey what you have instructed us to do.
159 Yahweh, please notice that I love what you have declared that we should do;

because you faithfully love me, please allow me to continue to live.

160 Everything that you have said is true;
every statement that you have made is right and will endure forever.

SIN and SHIN

161 Rulers persecute me for no reason,
but I deeply respect your words.

162 The things that you say make me very happy,
as happy as someone who has found a great treasure.

163 I thoroughly hate all lies
but I love your instructions.

164 I praise you throughout the day
because everything that you tell us to do is completely right.

165 Those who love your instructions live very peacefully;
they will continually do the right thing.

166 Yahweh, I confidently expect that you will rescue me,
and I obey what you have commanded us.

167 I obey what you have told us to do;
I love all of it very much.

168 I obey what you have instructed us to do,
because you know everything that I do.

TAW

169 Yahweh, please listen as I call out to you to help me;
help me to understand your message, as you said that you would do.

170 Please pay attention to me while I pray to you to help me,
and rescue me as you said that you would do.

171 I intend to continue praising you abundantly
because you teach me what you have told us to do.

172 I intend to continue singing about your instructions
because everything that you command us to do is right.
173 Please be always ready to help me
because I have chosen to obey what you have declared that we should do.
174 Yahweh, I eagerly desire for you to rescue me **from my enemies**,
and I greatly enjoy your instructions.
175 Please allow me to **continue to** live in order that I may **continue to** praise you
and may the things that you tell us to do **continue to** help me.
176 I am as vulnerable as a sheep that has left its flock;
please search for me, your servant, because I have not forgotten what you have commanded **us**.

120

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***
When I was distressed, I called out to Yahweh,
and he answered me.
2 **I prayed,** "Yahweh, rescue me from people who tell lies,
who say things to deceive me!"
3 You people who lie, God will certainly punish you.
He will do even more to you than that.
4 He will punish you severely as with a warrior's sharp arrows,
and as with burning coals from broom tree wood.
5 It is terrible for me that I **have to** live among **people like those in** Meshech,
that I **have to** dwell with **people like those who live in** the tents of Kedar.
6 I have lived too long among people
who hate to live peacefully with others.
7 I want to live peacefully, but whenever I speak **about it**,
they want to fight.

121

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***
I look toward the hills

and I ask myself, “Where will anyone to help me come from?”

2 I answer myself, “Yahweh is the one who helps me.”
He is the one who made everything that exists.

3 You say, “May Yahweh not let you stumble.
May Yahweh, who protects you, not become drowsy!”

4 I reply, “Listen to me, the one who protects the people of Israel
will never become drowsy; he never sleeps!”

5 Yahweh watches over you.
He stays between you and what might harm you, like a shade from the sun.

6 The sun will not harm you during the day,
and the moon will not harm you at night.

7 Yahweh will protect you from everything that could harm you.
He will keep you safe.

8 Yahweh will protect you in everything that you do.
He will do that now, and he will do that forever.

122

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship. This is a psalm of David.***

I was very happy when people said to me, “We should go to Yahweh’s temple in Jerusalem!”

2 Now we are standing inside the gates of Jerusalem.

3 This is Jerusalem, the city that people have built in a way that everything fits closely together.

4 The tribes of Israel who belong to Yahweh go there,
as Yahweh told them to do,
in order to thank him.

5 Indeed, the kings who belong to King David’s family
sit on their thrones there and judge the people.

6 Pray that people will live peacefully in Jerusalem!
May those who love Jerusalem be successful.

7 May everyone inside the city walls live well and prosper.

8 Because I love my fellow Israelites and my friends,

I want to say,
"May the people in Jerusalem live well."
9 Because Yahweh our God has his temple there,
I intend to always do what is best for Jerusalem.

123

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***

Yahweh, I look up toward you
who live in heaven.
2 You see, just as servants watch their master closely,
waiting for him to provide for them,
and just as a female servant watches her mistress,
in the same way, we look to Yahweh our God,
waiting for him to be merciful to us.
3 Yahweh, please be very merciful to us,
because people have despised us so much that we cannot endure any more.
4 We have endured far too much mocking
from people who are arrogant,
yes, from proud people who despise us.

124

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship; of David.***

If Yahweh had not been helping us—
All Israelites should repeat this—
2 If Yahweh had not been helping us
when our enemies attacked us,
3 then they would have destroyed us completely,
because they were so angry with us.
4 They would have overwhelmed us like a flood;
they would have swept over us like a raging river.
5 **They would have destroyed us as completely as** raging waters would have drowned us.

6 We praise Yahweh
because he did not let our enemies destroy us
as wild animals devour their prey.
7 We escaped from them like a bird that gets free from a hunter's trap.
It was as though the trap broke, and, as for us, we went free!
8 Yahweh is the one who helps us;
he is the one who made everything that exists.

125

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***
People who trust in Yahweh are as secure as Mount Zion,
which will stand firm forever.
2 Just as the hills surrounding Jerusalem protect the city,
so Yahweh protects his people,
and he will protect them forever.

3 Indeed, wicked people will not rule over the land that God gave to righteous people,
so that righteous people will not start doing what is wrong.

4 Yahweh, please do good things for people who do good things for others,
yes, for those who obey you sincerely.
5 But as for those people who choose to do evil things,
Yahweh will send them away along with everyone else who does evil things.
May Yahweh bless the people of Israel!

126

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***
When Yahweh brought us back to Zion after our enemies had captured us **and taken us away**,
we felt as if we were dreaming.
2 We laughed and shouted joyfully.
Then people from other people groups said about us,
"Yahweh has done great things for them!"

3 Yes! Yahweh truly has done great things for us,
and we are very happy.
4 Yahweh, restore us as before our enemies captured us,
as you restore the streams in the Negev that flow again after being dry.
5 Those who sow seeds while crying
will shout joyfully when they gather the harvest.
6 They may indeed walk through the field crying,
as they spread the seed from their bags.
But they will surely come back shouting joyfully,
carrying their bundles of grain.

127

1 *This is a psalm for people going up to the temple to worship. It is of Solomon.*
If people are building a house, but Yahweh does not approve of it,
those who build it are doing nothing useful.
If Yahweh does not protect a city,
it is useless for the guards to stay awake watching it.
2 It is useless for you to get up very early and stay up very late,
working hard to get food,
because Yahweh wants to give sleep to those whom he loves.
3 Children are a gift that Yahweh gives;
Offspring are a benefit from him.
4 When a man has sons while he is still young,
those sons become as useful as arrows are in the hand of a warrior.
5 A man who has many sons has such a good life!
When he argues with an opponent at the place where people settle disputes,
the opponent will not defeat him.

128

1 *This is a psalm for those going up to the temple to worship.*
How good life is for all who deeply revere Yahweh
and who do what he tells them to do!

2 You will enjoy eating the food that you have worked hard for,
and it will make you healthy.
3 Your wife will bear many children in the innermost rooms of your house,
like a grapevine that produces many grapes.
Your children will grow strong like young olive trees
as they fill the room around your table.
4 Yes, that is how Yahweh will bless every person
who deeply reveres him.
5 May Yahweh bless you from **where he lives** in Zion,
so that you may be able to experience how the people of Jerusalem prosper
during the whole time that you live,
6 and so that you may live long enough to see your grandchildren!
May the people of Israel live well!

129

1 ***A psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***
Ever since I was young, my enemies have oppressed me frequently.
All of the people of Israel should say this **with me**:
2 Ever since I was young, my enemies have oppressed me frequently,
but they have never defeated me!
3 **They oppressed me severely as though** they were plowing across my back,
making long wounds like furrows in a field.
4 Yahweh does what is right;
he no longer allows wicked people to control me.
5 May everyone who hates the people of Zion be ashamed and go away.
6 May they be **as insignificant** as the grass that grows on the rooftops
that dries up before anyone can pull it out,
7 that no harvester would **bother to** pick up
and that no one gathering bundles would **want to** wrap his arms around **to tie it up**.
8 They will never hear someone walking by **the reapers** say,
"May Yahweh bless you!"

They will not hear the reapers reply, "We bless you as representatives of Yahweh."

130

1 ***This is a psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***

Yahweh, I am very distressed, so I call out to you.

2 Lord, please listen to me;

please listen attentively as I call out to you to have mercy on me!

3 Yahweh, if you kept a record of the sins that we have committed,

Lord, you would have to condemn and punish every one of us!

4 But you forgive us,

with the result that we deeply revere you.

5 Yahweh has said that he would help me;

I trust what he said, and so I wait eagerly for him to do that.

6 I wait for the Lord to help me

more eagerly than watchmen wait for the morning to come;

yes, I wait more eagerly than watchmen wait for the morning!

7 My fellow Israelites, confidently expect that Yahweh will help us.

He will help us because he faithfully loves us,

and he is very willing to save us.

8 It is he who will make it so he will not need to punish us Israelite people for all the sins that we have committed.

131

1 ***This is a psalm for people going up to the temple to worship. It is a psalm of David.***

Yahweh, I am not a proud, haughty person.

I do not concern myself with things that are too great or too amazing for me.

2 Instead, I have calmed myself,

like a weaned child who rests calmly on the breast of his mother.

Yes, my inner being is peaceful like that contented child.

3 Israelites, confidently expect Yahweh to do good things for you,

now and forever!

132

1 ***This is a psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***

Yahweh, think about **King** David
and the many ways that he suffered.

2 He made a solemn promise to Yahweh,
the Mighty God whom Jacob worshiped.

3 **He said,** "I will not go home
or lie down on my bed to rest.

4 I will not allow myself to sleep at all

5 until I build a home for Yahweh,
the Mighty God whom Jacob worshiped."

6 Listen, we heard about the sacred chest in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields near Jaar (Kiriath-Jearim).

7 **We said**, "Let us go to the place where Yahweh lives;
let us worship **before the sacred chest** where he rests his feet."

8 Yahweh, come to the place where you will stay,
together with the sacred chest that represents your powerful presence.

9 May your priests always do what is right,
and may the people who are faithful to you shout joyfully.

10 Because of what you promised to David, who served you,
do not reject the king whom you chose.

11 Yahweh swore a promise to David,
and he will certainly not take it back: "I will place one of your own descendants
to rule as king on your throne.

12 If your sons obey my covenant
and the commands that I will teach them,
then their sons will also rule as kings on your throne forever."

13 Indeed, Yahweh has chosen Zion
because he wanted it to be the place where he lives.

14 **He said,** "This is the place where I will stay forever;

I will live here because I have chosen this place.

15 I will certainly give the people of Zion everything that they need;
I will give enough food to satisfy **even** the poor people who live there.

16 I will enable the priests of Zion to show others what a person looks like whom I have saved,
and the people there who are faithful to me will shout very joyfully.

17 In Zion I will cause a powerful king to come from David's family;
I have arranged for the king whom I have chosen that a son of his will always rule.

18 I will cause his enemies to be very ashamed,
but his kingdom will prosper."

133

1 ***This is a psalm for people going up to the temple to worship. It is of David.***

Think about how wonderful and delightful it is when God's people live together **in a unified way**!

2 It is as delightful as **watching someone pour** fine olive oil on the head of Aaron, **the priest,**
oil that runs down onto his beard
and flows down to the collar of his robes.

3 It is as delightful as **feeling** the dew from Mount Hermon
coming down on the mountains of Zion.
That is where Yahweh blessed **his people**,
giving them a way to live forever.

134

1 ***This is a psalm for people going up to the temple to worship.***

Listen! Praise Yahweh,
all you who serve Yahweh,
you who stand in Yahweh's temple during the night hours.

2 Raise your hands **to pray toward** the holy place
and praise Yahweh.

3 I pray that Yahweh will bless you from **his temple on** Mount Zion,

for he is the one who made everything that exists.

135 1 Praise Yahweh!
Praise him because of who he is!
You who serve Yahweh, praise him,
2 you who stand and serve in Yahweh's temple,
in the courtyards of the house of our God!
3 Praise Yahweh, because he is good;
sing praises to him, because doing that is delightful.
4 Praise him because Yahweh chose us, the descendants of Jacob,
the people of Israel, to belong only to him.
5 Indeed, I know very well that Yahweh is great
and that our Lord is more powerful than all other spirit beings.
6 Yahweh does whatever he wants to do,
everywhere, whether it is in heaven or on the earth
or in the ocean, even deep down in the ocean.
7 He causes clouds to form in distant places on the earth;
he makes lightning flash along with the rain,
and he sends out wind from the places where he stores it.
8 He killed every firstborn in Egypt,
including those from both people and animals.
9 He did amazing miracles
among the people of Egypt
to punish Pharaoh and all of his officials.
10 He defeated many nations
and killed their powerful kings.
11 He killed Sihon, king of the Amorites,
and Og, king of Bashan,
and all the kings of Canaan.
12 Then he gave the land that those kings had ruled over
to his own people, that is, to us, the people of Israel, to be our own land.

13 Yahweh, people will always know how great you are;
Yahweh, people in every generation will remember you,
14 because Yahweh defends his people
and is merciful to those who serve him.
15 The idols that other people groups worship are only statues made of silver and gold;
people made them with their own hands.
16 Those idols have mouths, but they cannot say anything;
they have eyes, but they cannot see anything.
17 They have ears, but they cannot hear anything;
In fact, they do not even breathe.
18 The people who make those idols will become as helpless as they are,
and so will everyone who trusts in them.
19 You Israelites, praise Yahweh!
You descendants of Aaron, praise Yahweh!
20 You descendants of Levi, praise Yahweh!
All you who deeply revere Yahweh, praise him!
21 Praise Yahweh from his temple on Mount Zion,
where he lives in Jerusalem!
Praise Yahweh!

136 1 Thank Yahweh because he is good to us,
because he faithfully loves us forever!
2 Thank God, the one who is greater than all other spirit beings,
because he faithfully loves us forever!
3 Thank the Lord, the one who is greater than all other rulers;
because he faithfully loves us forever!
4 Thank him, the only one who does wonderful miracles,
because he faithfully loves us forever!
5 Thank him, the one who wisely created the heavens;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

6 Thank him, the one who formed the earth over the waters;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

7 Thank him, the one who created the great lights in the sky;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

8 He made the sun to light up the daytime,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

9 He made the moon and stars to light up the nighttime,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

10 Thank him, who killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

11 He brought the Israelite people out from among them,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

12 He did that by being very powerful,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

13 Thank him, the one who divided the Sea of Reeds into two parts;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

14 He enabled the Israelite people to walk through the middle of it on dry land,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

15 But he caused Pharaoh and his army to drown in the Sea of Reeds,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

16 Thank him, the one who led his people safely through the desert,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

17 Thank him, the one who defeated powerful kings,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

18 He killed powerful kings,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

19 He killed Sihon, the king of the Amorites,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

20 He killed Og, the king of Bashan;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

21 He gave their land to the people of Israel to possess;

because he faithfully loves us forever!

22 He gave it to the people of Israel, who serve him, to be our own land,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

23 He did not forget about us when our enemies were oppressing us,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

24 He rescued us from our enemies,
because he faithfully loves us forever!

25 He gives food to every living creature;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

26 Thank God, who rules from heaven;
because he faithfully loves us forever!

137

1 After soldiers had taken us to Babylon, we sat down by the rivers there,
and we cried when we thought about the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

2 We hung our harps on the willow trees there
and did not play them.

3 We did that because those who had captured us and taken us there demanded that we sing for them.
They tormented us and told us to sing a joyful song. They said, "Sing for us one of the songs about Zion!"

4 We thought, "We are not able to sing joyful songs about Yahweh
in this foreign land!"

5 If I ever forget about Jerusalem,
may my right hand be unable to play the harp!

6 May my tongue and my mouth make me unable to sing
if I forget about Jerusalem,
or even if I do not consider that Jerusalem causes me to be more joyful
than anything else does.

7 Yahweh, please punish the Edomites for what they did
when the enemy destroyed Jerusalem. They shouted,
"Completely tear it down to its foundations!"

8 Concerning the people of Babylon, who devastate **other nations**,
How good it will be for the person who completely pays them back
with what they did to us!
9 How good it will be for the one who seizes your babies
and smashes them against the rocks!

138

1 ***This is a psalm of David.***

Yahweh, I sincerely thank you.
In the presence of **idols of** other gods, I sing to praise you.
2 I bow down toward your sacred temple **to worship you**
and I thank you because you faithfully love us and because we can trust you to do all that you have promised.
You have given cause for people everywhere to honor you and what you have said more than anything else.
3 When I called out to you, you helped me;
you enabled me to be brave and strong.
4 Yahweh, **someday** all the kings of this earth should praise you
because they will have heard what you have said.
5 They should sing about what you have done
because you are very glorious.
6 Yahweh, although you live in heaven,
you take care of humble people.
Proud people, however, you identify from far away.
7 Even when dangerous things happen all around me,
you keep me safe.
You rescue me from my enemies who are angry with me.
8 Yahweh, I know that you will continue to do what is good for me;
Yahweh, you faithfully love **us** forever.
Please do not abandon **us,** the people that you have made!

139

1 ***This is a note for the worship leader: This is a psalm of David.***

Yahweh, you have thoroughly examined me,

and you know **me completely**.

2 You are the one who knows everything that I do, including when I sit and when I stand.

Even from far away, you know what I am thinking.

3 You have examined in detail all of my movements, from the time I go out until I lie down,

and you know intimately all of my habits.

4 Indeed, even before I say anything,

Yahweh, you already know everything that I am going to say!

5 You guard me on every side,

and you put your hand on me **to protect me**.

6 I am in awe that you know everything about me.

I am not able to comprehend that.

7 There is nowhere I could go to get away from your Spirit!

There is nowhere I could run to escape from your presence!

8 If I went up to heaven, you would be there.

Even if I lay down in the place where dead people go, you would be there!

9 If I rose up and flew to where the sun rises in the east,

or if I settled in the farthest place across the **western** sea,

10 even there you would guide me

and you would keep me secure.

11 Even if I said, “Let the darkness completely overwhelm me,

and the light around me turn to night,”

12 even darkness is not dark to you,

and the night shines as bright as the daytime.

For you, darkness and light are the same.

13 Indeed, you are the one who created my deepest inner parts;

you formed me inside my mother’s womb.

14 I praise you because you made me in such an awesome and wonderful way.
Everything that you do is wonderful!
I know that very well.
15 You saw my bones when you made me in that hidden place.
As you wove me together deep in the womb,
16 you saw me before I had any form.
You wrote in your book each day that you had planned for me to live,
before any of those days had even started.
17 God, the things that you think are very valuable to me!
There are so many of them!
18 If I tried to count them, **I would not be able to do that, because** they are more than the grains of sand **on the earth**.
Every morning I wake up, I am still with you, **and there are still more of them to count**.
19 God, I wish that you would kill all wicked people!
I wish that all violent men would go away from me!
20 They say wicked things about you and plan evil things;
your enemies misuse your name.
21 Yahweh, I certainly hate those who hate you,
and I am disgusted with those who rise up against you.
22 I hate them completely;
I consider them to be my enemies.
23 God, I invite you to search me and to know what I am thinking;
please examine me and know what I worry about.
24 See if there is any harmful way in me,
and teach me to live in the way that lasts forever.

140

This is a note to the worship leader: David wrote this psalm.

1 Yahweh, please save me from evil people;
protect me from people who want to attack me.
2 They are always planning how to do evil things,

and every day they provoke fights.

3 They say things **to people** that hurt **them**;
what comes from their mouths is as deadly as the venom of a viper. *Selah*

4 Yahweh, protect me from wicked people who want to harm me;
keep me safe from violent people
who have planned to destroy me.

5 Proud people are trying to destroy me.
It is as though they have hidden a snare for me;
It is as though they have spread out a net along my path;
It is as though they have set traps to catch me. *Selah*

6 I say to you, "Yahweh, you are my God."
Yahweh, please listen to me as I plead with you to help me!

7 Yahweh, my Lord, you are the one who powerfully saves me;
you have protected me during battles as though you had covered my head
with a helmet.

8 Yahweh, do not give wicked people what they want;
do not let their plans succeed, or they will become proud. *Selah*

9 As for the leaders of those who surround me,
let the harmful things that they have said **to others** happen to them.

10 Pour burning coals on them!
Throw them into a fire!
Throw them into deep holes from which they will never get out!

11 Yahweh, please do not allow people who slander others to prosper in this land;
Cause evil things to continually happen to violent people and destroy them.

12 Yahweh, I know that you do what is just
and right for poor people.

13 People who do what is right will surely thank you,
and they will live with you.

141

1 ***This is a psalm of David.***

Yahweh, I call out to you; please help me quickly!

Please listen to me when I am calling out to you.

2 Please accept my prayer **as though it were** an offering of incense to you.

Please accept me while I lift up my hands **to pray to you**,

just as you accept the sacrifices that people offer to you each evening.

3 Yahweh, do not allow me to say things that are bad or wrong.

Do not allow me to say those things as a sentry does not allow the wrong people to go through a doorway.

4 Prevent me from wanting to do anything that is wrong

and from joining with wicked men when they want to do evil deeds.

Do not even allow me to share in eating their delightful food!

5 It is all right if righteous people strike me

because they are acting faithfully and kindly toward me to correct me.

If they do that, it will be as if they have honored me by anointing my head with **olive** oil, and may I never refuse to accept it.

but I am always praying that you will punish the wicked because of the wicked deeds that they do.

6 When their rulers are thrown down from the top of rocky cliffs,

the wicked will hear what I am saying, and will know that what I am saying is right and good.

7 **They will say,** "Just as one scatters **clods of earth** when he breaks up the ground, **soon** our bodies will lie scattered on the way to the place where dead people are."

8 But Lord Yahweh, I continue to rely on you.

I ask you to protect me;

please do not stop protecting my life!

9 People who do evil things are trying to trick me and destroy me.

It is as though they have laid out snares and set traps for me.

Please keep me safe from what they are trying to do to me.

10 I desire that wicked people fall together into the traps that they have set **to catch me**,

while, for my part, I escape **from them**.

142 *This is a psalm that David prayed when he was hiding in a cave.*

1 Yahweh, I cry out to you;
I plead for you to help me.
2 I am complaining to you about **all of** my problems;
I am telling you **all of** my troubles.
3 When I am very discouraged,
you are the one who knows what I must do.
As I go about my activities, **it is as though** my enemies have hidden traps along my path for me **to fall into**.
4 If you look to my right you will see
that there is no one who watches over me.
There is nowhere I can go to be safe,
and no one cares what happens to me.
5 So Yahweh, I called out to you **to help me**;
I said, "You are the one who protects me;
you are all that I need while I am alive."
6 Please listen to me while I call out to you **to help me**
because I am very distressed.
Save me from those who are making me suffer,
because they are stronger than I am.
7 Please free me from those who are distressing me
so that I may thank you.
When you do that, the other righteous people will gather with me **to praise you together**
because you will have fulfilled my request.

143 *1 This is a psalm of David.*

Yahweh, please listen to me as I pray to you, pleading for you to help me!
Because you are righteous

and because you faithfully do what you have promised,
please do what I am asking you to do for me!

2 Please do not judge me, your servant,
because you know that there is no one alive who is completely innocent.

3 Please help me because my enemies have pursued me;
they have completely defeated me.
It is as though they have already put me in a grave
like people who are dead for eternity.

4 So I am very discouraged;
I feel very dismayed.

5 I remember what has happened previously;
I think about all the things that you have done;
I consider the **great** deeds that you have performed.

6 I lift up my hands to you **as I pray**;
I need you, just as much as a very dry land needs water. *Selah*

7 Yahweh, I am absolutely despairing,
so please answer me right now!
Do not keep away from me
because if you do that, I will **soon** be among those who descend to where the dead people are.

8 Every morning cause me to remember that you faithfully love me
because I trust in you.
show me the things that I should do
because I depend on you for my life.

9 Yahweh, please save me from my enemies;
I rely on you to protect me.

10 You are the God to whom I belong,
so teach me to do what pleases you.
I want your good Spirit to show me the best way to live.

11 Yahweh, please keep me alive because of who you are;

because you are righteous, please rescue me from the people who are
oppressing me!

12 I am one who serves you;
so because you faithfully love me as you promised to do,
please kill all of my enemies who want to kill me.

144

1 ***This is a psalm of David.***

I praise Yahweh, who protects me!
He equips me to fight well in wars.

2 He is always faithful and kind to me.
He keeps me safe and helps me escape from danger,
as if he were my shield
or a place where I could go to be safe.
He enables me to rule other peoples.

3 Yahweh, people are so insignificant;
it is amazing that you pay any attention to them!

4 People live for only a very short time,
just as a mist or a shadow quickly disappears.

5 Yahweh, please come down from the sky
and split open the mountains so that smoke pours from them.

6 Please send lightning bolts like arrows
against my enemies to make them run away.

7 Reach down from heaven and rescue me from my enemies
who are surrounding me like a dangerous flood.
Save me from the power of these foreign people.

8 They say things that are not true
and raise their right hands to swear oaths that are false.

9 God, I will sing a new song to you
and play my ten-stringed harp to praise you,

10 because you are the one who saves kings
and who rescues me, your servant David, from danger in battle.

11 Save me from the power of these foreign people.
They say things that are not true
and raise their right hands to swear oaths that are false.
12 Then our sons will be like strong plants
that grow tall when they are young,
and our daughters will be as beautiful and stately
as pillars that craftsmen carve to decorate a palace.
13 May our barns overflow with many kinds of crops.
May our sheep give birth to great numbers of lambs,
yes, very great numbers as they graze in our pastures.
14 May our oxen be strong to pull plows.
May no one break through our walls, may no one go into exile,
and may no one cry out **in distress** in our city squares.
15 What a good life people have when these things happen for them!
What a good life people have who worship Yahweh as their God!

145

1 ***This is a psalm of David.***
My God and king, I will proclaim that you are very great;
I will praise you now and always.
2 I will bless you every day;
I will praise you forever.
3 Yahweh, you are great, and people should praise you very much;
no one can fully understand how great you are.
4 People of every generation will tell the next generation about what you have done;
they will tell about your mighty deeds.
5 I will think about how very glorious and majestic you are,
and I will think about your wonderful deeds.
6 People will talk about how powerful your awesome deeds are,
and I will proclaim how great you are.
7 People will celebrate how very good you are,

and they will sing joyfully about how righteous you are.

8 Yahweh acts kindly and mercifully;
he does not quickly become angry, and he faithfully loves us very much.

9 Yahweh is good to everyone,
and he acts mercifully toward everything that he has made.

10 Yahweh, all the creatures that you have made will praise you,
and the people who are faithful to you will bless you.

11 They will tell others about how gloriously you rule as king
and about how powerful you are,

12 so that all people will know about your mighty deeds
and about how gloriously and majestically you rule.

13 You will never stop ruling as king;
you will rule throughout every generation.

14 Yahweh sustains people who are in difficult circumstances,
and he helps those who are struggling.

15 All creatures look to you expectantly,
and you give them food when they need it.

16 You give generously
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

17 Yahweh does everything rightly;
indeed, he acts faithfully in all that he does.

18 Yahweh is ready to help everyone who asks him for help
when they do that sincerely.

19 He gives those who deeply respect him what they need.
He responds to them when they call for help,
and he rescues them.

20 Yahweh protects all those who love him,
but he destroys wicked people.

21 I will always say things to praise Yahweh;
I want all people always to praise him because he is so holy.

146

1 Praise Yahweh!

I will praise Yahweh with my whole being.

2 I will praise Yahweh for as long as I am alive;

Yes, I will sing to praise my God for the rest of my life.

3 Since no human being can save you,

do not rely on your leaders.

4 When they die, their bodies decay and become soil again.

When that happens, they can no longer carry out their plans.

5 Some people confidently expect Yahweh their God to help them.

He is the God whom Jacob worshiped.

He does help them, and they have a very good life.

6 He is the one who created the sky and the land.

He also created the oceans and all the creatures that are in them.

He always does what he has promised to do.

7 He defends people whom others oppress,

and he provides food for people who are hungry.

Yahweh frees people who are in prison.

8 Yahweh enables people who are blind to see again;

Yahweh helps people who are struggling;

Yahweh loves people who do what is right.

9 Yahweh protects foreigners;

he preserves the property of orphans and widows,

but he makes the plans of wicked people fail.

10 Yahweh will be the king forever;

yes, the God of the people of Jerusalem will always reign.

Praise Yahweh!

147

1 Praise Yahweh!

Singing praises to our God is a good thing to do.

He deserves it, and it makes us happy.

2 Yahweh is rebuilding Jerusalem

and bringing back the Israelites whom our enemies had scattered.

3 He comforts people who are very sad
and heals their pain.

4 He knows how many stars there are,
and he has given each one its name.

5 Our Lord is great and very powerful;
no one can measure how much he understands.

6 Yahweh helps humble people,
but he makes wicked people fail in what they want to do.

7 Thank Yahweh, our God, for all he has done for us
as you play the harp and sing to him.

8 He makes the sky form rain clouds
so that they will rain on the earth
and make grass grow on the mountains.

9 He provides food for wild animals.
He even feeds young ravens when they cry out for food.

10 He does not value the strength of a horse
or the speed of a human runner.

11 Instead, Yahweh values people who deeply respect him.
He values people who confidently expect him
to be faithful to his covenant promises.

12 Praise Yahweh our God, you people of Jerusalem
who live on Mount Zion!

13 He has made the defenses of your city strong,
and he has blessed the people who live among you.

14 He keeps your borders safe,
and gives you plenty of wheat to eat.

15 He gives commands about what will happen on the earth,
and these things happen right away.

16 He makes snow that covers the ground like a white wool blanket,
and he scatters frost on the ground like ashes.

17 He hurls down hail like small stones.
When he makes it cold, no one can stand outside.
18 But then he gives a command, and the snow and ice melt.
He sends a warm wind, and the water flows again.
19 He told the descendants of Jacob how he wanted them to live.
Yes, he gave decrees and laws to the Israelites.
20 He has not done this for any other nation;
they do not know his laws.
Praise Yahweh!

148 1 Praise Yahweh!
You who are in heaven, praise Yahweh;
yes, you who are in the highest places, praise him.
2 All you angels, praise him;
all you heavenly armies, praise him.
3 Sun and moon, praise him;
all you shining stars, praise him.
4 You highest heavens, praise him,
and you waters above the sky, praise him.
5 Let all of these praise Yahweh,
because he created them by his own command.
6 He set them in their places permanently;
to do that, he made a decree that will always be in effect.
7 You who are on the earth, praise Yahweh!
You great sea creatures and everything deep in the ocean,
8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
and strong winds that obey what he commands,
9 all you mountains and hills,
all you fruit trees and cedar trees,
10 all you wild animals and livestock,
all you creatures that crawl on the ground

and all you birds that fly in the sky,

11 you kings of the earth and all your peoples,

you rulers and all you judges,

12 you young men and young women,

you old people and children,

13 you should all praise Yahweh,

because he alone is truly great.

He is more glorious than everything on earth and in heaven.

14 He has made his people strong,

and other nations respect them.

His people are the Israelite people,

who are close to him.

Praise Yahweh!

149

1 Praise Yahweh!

Sing a new song to Yahweh!

Let his faithful people praise him when they gather together.

2 You Israelite people, God made you.

Be happy because of what he has done for you.

You people of Jerusalem, rejoice because God is your king.

3 Praise Yahweh by dancing.

Play tambourines and harps to honor him.

4 Do that because Yahweh loves his people;

he honors poor people by rescuing them.

5 God's faithful people should celebrate because he has honored them.

Even on their beds at night, they should praise him with joyful songs.

6 They should also shout loudly to praise God

when they go into battle holding swords that have two sharp edges.

7 **They should be ready** to punish the people of other nations

for the sins they have committed against God.

8 They should bind their kings with chains

and put iron shackles on their leaders.

9 In that way, they will carry out the judgment that God has decreed against them.
God will give his faithful people the honor **of doing that for him**.
Praise Yahweh!

150 **1** Praise Yahweh!
Praise God in his temple here on earth,
and praise him in the heavens that he created by his power!
2 Praise him for the mighty things he has done!
Praise him because he is so very great!
3 Praise him by blowing horns loudly!
Praise him by playing lyres and harps!
4 Praise him by beating tambourines and by dancing!
Praise him by playing stringed instruments and flutes!
5 Praise him by playing loud cymbals
and cymbals that make high notes!
6 Let everything that breathes praise Yahweh!
Praise Yahweh!

Proverbs

1

1 These are the wise sayings said by Solomon. He was David's son and Israel's king.

2 These wise sayings are for knowing what is wise and instructive.
They are for understanding insightful things that people say.

3 These wise sayings are for instructing someone about what is insightful,
righteous, just, and honest.

4 They are for making naive people prudent,
and for making young people knowledgeable and discreet.

5 (Let wise people listen to these wise sayings and learn more.
Indeed, let these sayings guide understanding people so that they know what to do.)

6 These wise sayings are for understanding wise sayings and parables.
Indeed, they are for understanding what wise people say and the riddles they tell.

7 In order to become knowledgeable, a person must begin by deeply respecting Yahweh.
But foolish people detest what is wise or instructive.

8 My child, listen carefully to what I, your father, am teaching you.
Indeed, obey the rules that your mother has commanded.

9 Obey your parents' teaching because then people will admire and respect you; it will be as if those teachings were an attractive wreath on your head,
or beautiful necklaces around your neck.

10 My child, if sinful people tempt you to sin with them,
refuse to do so.

11 Those sinful people may say, "Join us!
We will hide and wait in order to kill someone who walks by.

Indeed, we will hide ourselves in order to suddenly attack an innocent person for no good reason.

12 We will kill living people completely, as if we were their grave.

Yes, we will kill healthy people, as if they could not escape dying.

13 We will discover many valuable treasures!

We will fill our houses with what we steal!

14 Join our gang!

We will share all the loot between us."

15 My child, do not associate with those sinful people!

Prevent yourself from doing the things that they do!

16 **Avoid those sinners** because they are eager to do wicked things.

They even rush to murder people.

17 It is useless **for a hunter** to put out a net **to trap a bird**

while the bird is watching **because the bird will avoid the net**.

18 However, **these sinful people are more foolish than birds.** They hide in wait, but they kill themselves.

Indeed, they hide so that they can suddenly attack, but they themselves die.

19 That is what happens to anyone who gains wealth in an unjust manner.

What they gained unjustly will kill them.

20 Imagine that everything that is wise is a woman who calls out **to everyone** in public.

Imagine that this woman shouts **to people** in crowded places.

21 Imagine that she calls out **to people** at the place where busy streets intersect.

Imagine that she speaks her **wise** words at the **crowded** entrance of the city gates.

22 She says, "You naive people have loved being naive for too long!

You people who ridicule **others** have enjoyed ridiculing **others** to benefit yourselves for too long!

You foolish people have hated what you should know for too long!

23 Turn around **and listen** to me when I correct you!

Listen! I will tell you all that I am thinking.

Indeed, I will help you to understand what I have to say to you.

24 I called out to you, but you refused to listen.

Indeed, I invited you to come to me,

but no one paid any attention to me.

25 You ignored everything that I advised you to do.

Indeed, you rejected what I said to correct you.

26 Therefore, as for me, I will laugh at you when disastrous things happen to you.

Indeed, I will ridicule you when you are terrified.

27 Yes, when you are terrified as if a violent storm has arrived,

when disastrous things happen to you violently,

and when you become distressed and anguished, I will ridicule you!

28 At that time, those foolish people will cry out to me to help them,

but I will not reply to them.

Indeed, they will desperately look for me,

but they will not be able to find me.

29 Those foolish people will not find me because they refuse to learn.

Also, they have decided not to respect Yahweh.

30 Those foolish people rejected what I advised them to do.

Indeed, they detested everything I said to correct them.

31 Those foolish people will suffer rightly for what they have done.

Indeed, they will suffer fully for what they have planned.

32 Ultimately, naive people will die because they refuse to be wise.

Indeed, being complacent will destroy foolish people.

33 By contrast, people who listen attentively to what I say will live safely.

They will not fear that something evil might happen to them."

2

1 My child, accept what I say.

Consider what I command you to be precious.

2 Do this by listening carefully to what is wise,

and by thinking seriously about what you should understand.

3 Yes, cry out to God for him to show you what you should perceive.

Call loudly to God for him to teach you what you should understand!

4 Try to learn what is wise as eagerly as you would try to find silver.

Indeed, look for it as you would look for a treasure that someone has hidden.

5 If you do those things, then you will understand how to reverently fear Yahweh.

If you do those things, then you will be able to know God.

6 This is because Yahweh provides people with what is wise.

He tells them what they should know and understand.

7 He gives what is truly wise to upright people.

He protects people who behave honestly.

8 He does these things in order to guard those people who live justly.

Indeed, he keeps safe those people who are faithful to him.

9 If you listen to me, then you will understand what is righteous, just, and honest—

all the best ways to behave.

10 This is because you will truly know what is wise,

and knowing what is wise will please you.

11 Being able to choose wisely will make you safe.

Indeed, being able to understand what is happening around you will make you secure.

12 Being wise like this will keep you from doing wicked things,

and you will stay away from people who speak perversely.

13 Those people refuse to behave righteously in order to behave wickedly.

14 They gladly do what is wrong.

They enjoy doing things that are perverse and evil.

15 They behave deceptively.

Indeed, they act deviously.

16 Being discreet and insightful will protect you also from adulterous women.

Being discreet and insightful will save you from immoral women who speak to you seductively.

17 Those women left the husbands they married when they were young.

They even forgot what they had promised to God when they married.

18 Being discreet and insightful will rescue you because going to such a woman's
house will cause you to die.

Indeed, going with her is the same as going to the place where the spirits of
dead people are.

19 No man who acts adulterously with her will live again.

He will no longer be able to live in a way that results in life with God.

20 Therefore, behave like a good person.

Indeed, conduct yourself like a righteous person.

21 This is important because only people who live uprightly will live in our land,

Indeed, it is the people who do not act wickedly who will stay in this land for
a long time.

22 By contrast, Yahweh will remove people who act wickedly from our land.

Be sure of this: Yahweh will completely remove people who act
treacherously from this land!

3

1 My child, remember the rules I have taught you!

Always be mindful to obey what I have commanded you!

2 Do this because obeying what I have commanded you will help you live for a
long time with many fulfilling and peaceful years.

3 Always be faithful and trustworthy.

Let everyone see how faithful and trustworthy you are, as if they were a
necklace you are wearing.

Remember to be faithful and trustworthy at all times.

4 As a result of doing so, both God and people will approve of you and consider
you an insightful person.

5 Trust Yahweh completely,

and do not rely on what you understand.

6 Let Yahweh lead you whenever you do anything.

As a result of doing so, he will show you what you should do.

7 Do not think that you know what is best.

Instead, revere Yahweh and refuse to do what is evil.

8 Doing so will make your body healthy.

Indeed, doing so will strengthen you from the inside.

9 Revere Yahweh by giving to him some of your riches,

and by giving to him some of the first crops from everything that you harvest.

10 Doing so will result in your places for storing crops becoming completely full of crops.

Even your containers for wine will overflow with fresh wine.

11 My child, do not refuse to listen when Yahweh corrects you.

Do not be resentful even when he rebukes you.

12 Do not respond in that way because Yahweh only reproves the people whom he loves,

just as a father reproves the children whom he cherishes.

13 People who become wise are happy.

Indeed, the people who understand Yahweh's world are the ones who are truly happy.

14 This is because being wise benefits people more than silver could benefit them.

Indeed, being wise is worth more to people than having gold.

15 Being wise is more valuable than precious jewels.

There is nothing that you could desire that is worth as much as being wise.

16 Being wise will help you live for a long time.

Being wise will help you become wealthy and honorable.

17 Being wise will allow you to live pleasantly.

Indeed, in every way being wise will allow you to live peacefully.

18 What is wise is like a tree with fruit that sustains the people who possess it,

People who are consistently wise live happily.

19 Yahweh made the world through being wise.

Through being skillful, he made the sky and everything in it.

20 Through knowing all things, Yahweh made water burst forth from deep below the earth and he made water fall from the clouds above.

21 My child, always remember to do what is prudent and brings a good outcome.

Always be mindful to do those things.

22 Doing so will give you a satisfying life

and people will honor and respect you.

23 Doing what is prudent and good will **also** cause you to live safely.
They will keep you from making any serious mistakes.

24 When you lie down **to sleep**, you will not fear anything.
You will lie down **to sleep** and sleep peacefully.

25 Do not worry about something terrible suddenly happening **to you**,
or about **what will happen** when God destroys wicked people.

26 **Do not worry** because Yahweh will make you confident.
He will not allow people to harm you.

27 Do not refrain from giving what is good to people who deserve it
when you are able to do so.

28 When you are with a friend **who needs something**, and you have it with you, do not tell that person,
"Go away and come back tomorrow. I will give it to you then."

29 Do not plan to harm people that you interact with, because they live near you and they trust you.

30 Do not argue needlessly with someone who has not harmed you.

31 Do not envy violent people.
Do not imitate anything they do.

32 **Do not do so** because Yahweh detests **such** people who act wickedly,
but he converses like a friend with people who act uprightly.

33 Yahweh causes bad things to happen to the families of wicked people,
but he causes good things to happen to the families of righteous people.

34 When people ridicule **others**, it is Yahweh who ridicules them,
but he kindly helps those who are humble.

35 People will honor wise people,
but people will shame foolish people.

4

1 Children, listen carefully to what I, your father, am teaching you.
Pay attention in order to learn what you should understand.

2 **Do this** because what I am teaching you is good.

So remember the rules that I am teaching you.

3 When I was just a boy with my father,

and my mother's delicate, only son.

4 During that time, my father taught me. He told me,

"Remember what I have told you!

Do what I have commanded you, so that you will keep on living!

5 Learn what is wise and what you should understand!

Always remember and keep doing the things that I have said to you!

6 Keep doing what is wise, because doing so will keep you safe.

Love doing what is wise, because being wise will protect you from harm.

7 Being wise is the most important thing. So become wise!

Even if it costs you everything that you own, become a person who understands God's world!

8 Prize what is wise, so that you will become great.

People will honor you when you value what is wise.

9 Being wise will make you respectable, as though you had an attractive wreath on your head.

Indeed, being wise will make you honorable, as though you were wearing a magnificent crown."

10 My child, listen attentively and accept what I say.

Doing so will increase the number of years that you live.

11 I instructed you in how to act wisely.

I directed you in how to live in the right way.

12 If you follow my teaching, nothing will hinder you from succeeding.

Indeed, if you attempt great things, you will do well.

13 Consistently remember the things I have instructed you;

keep remembering them!

Always be mindful of them, because they will keep you alive.

14 Do not do what wicked people do.

Indeed, do not behave in the way that evil people behave.

15 Shun doing what is evil. Do not even consider doing it!

Refuse to act wickedly and do something else.

16 **Do not act wickedly** because **it is as if** evil people cannot even sleep unless they have done something evil **on that day**;

it is as if they cannot rest unless they hurt someone.

17 **Do not act wickedly** because evil people do wicked things as if they were eating food;

they violently hurt others as if they were drinking wine.

18 As for righteous people, they will live **wisely and safely** as people do who walk in the sunshine;

they will live more and more wisely and safely, just as the sun shines brighter and brighter until the brightest time of day.

19 **But** the way that wicked people live is **dangerous,** like people **who walk** in total darkness.

Like people walking in darkness do not know what they trip over, wicked people do not know **what hurts them**.

20 My child, pay attention to what I am saying to you!

Listen carefully to what I say!

21 Keep thinking about what I say!

Fully commit yourself to remembering such things!

22 **Do this** because those who live according to my words will have good lives,

and their whole bodies will be healthy.

23 More than anything else, be extremely careful about what you think and desire,

because those things will control how you live.

24 Do not say anything that deceives people.

Indeed, never say anything that misleads people.

25 **Focus on doing what is right, like** someone who is always looking straight ahead.

Indeed, **act like** someone who is looking straight in front of himself.

26 Plan carefully to do things in the right way.

As a result **of doing so**, you will succeed in everything that you do.

27 Do not do anything other than what is right.

Prevent yourself from doing what is evil.

5

1 My son, pay attention to the wise things that I tell you!
Listen carefully to what I say you should understand!
2 Do this so that you will be able to choose wisely what to do,
and so that you will know the right things to say.
3 Do this because what adulterous women say seems delightful like the taste of honey.
Yes, their words are more soothing than how olive oil feels on your skin.
4 However, after being with such a woman you will be miserable, as if you had eaten a bitter plant.
You will suffer like a person whom someone has cut with a sharp, double-edged sword.
5 Being with such a woman will cause both of you to die.
Indeed, what she does with you will cause you to become a dead person.
6 She does not want to do what will cause her to live well.
She does not realize that she lives precariously like someone who is walking on a broken path.
7 So now, children, pay attention to what I say!
Always remember what I have spoken to you!
8 Stay far away from any adulterous woman!
Do not even go near the door of the place where such a woman dwells!
9 If you go to such a woman, you will be giving the best efforts of your youth to others,
and a merciless person will take away everything that you would gain in the best time of your life.
10 If you go to such a woman, people you do not know will satisfy themselves with what you produced when you were strong,
and an outsider will fill his house with what you labored to gain.
11 Then you will groan when you are about to die
and have worn out your whole body.
12 Then you will say, “I hated it extremely when people corrected me!
Indeed, I scorned people when they rebuked me!

13 I did not obey the people who taught me.
Indeed, I did not listen carefully to the people who instructed me.
14 My people are close to considering me as someone who has wasted his life.”
15 **So be like** someone who only drinks water from his own well;
have sex with your wife only.
16 **Do not be like** someone who lets his water run out into the streets;
never have sex with other women!
17 Only have sex with your own wife!
Do not have sex with other women!
18 **As a result,** may Yahweh bless your marriage **with children**;
enjoy **sexually** the woman whom you married when you were young!
19 **She is as beautiful as** a loving deer and a graceful mountain goat.
Let her breasts satisfy you always.
Constantly be exhilarated by how she loves you.
20 My son, you should never be exhilarated by an adulterous woman!
You should never passionately caress an immoral woman!
21 **Never do that** because Yahweh fully knows what people do.
Indeed, he knows everything that people do.
22 The wicked things that wicked people do are **like** traps that catch them;
the sinful things that they do are **like** ropes by which others can grab them.
23 Those wicked people will die because they did not discipline themselves.
They will do what kills them because they are extremely foolish.

6 1 My child, if you guarantee to pay a loan for someone you meet,
that is, if you agree to pay a loan for someone you do not know,
2 **if in this way** you have said things that you regret
because it would be very difficult for you **to fulfill** what you promised,
3 then, my child, do this in order to save yourself **from having to pay back this loan**:
humbly go to that person and beg him **to cancel what you have promised**,
because he now controls you.
4 Do not wait until tomorrow; **go immediately!**

do not allow yourself to rest **until you go and talk to him**.

5 Save yourself **immediately**,
as if you were a deer fleeing from a hunter
or a bird fleeing from a trapper.

6 You lazy person, learn **something** from **watching** ants!
Consider what ants do so that you can be wise.

7 Absolutely no one tells ants what to do.

8 **Nevertheless,** they work hard all during the summer,
gathering and storing food **to eat during the winter**.

9 **But** you lazy person, stop sleeping!
Wake up!

10 **If you say to yourself,** "Let me sleep just a little more!
Let me lay my hands **across my chest** in order to rest comfortably for a little while longer!"

11 Then **the result of being so lazy will be that** you will become poor and needy
just as surely as if a thief has robbed you.

12 **I will describe for you what** worthless, sinful people **do. They** constantly deceive people by what they say.

13 They make gestures, such as winking their eyes, signaling with their feet, and pointing their fingers **to communicate their evil plans to their friends**.

14 They are always thinking perversely while planning how to do evil things.
They cause people to argue **with each other**.

15 Because of this, disastrous things will suddenly happen to those people.
Someone will destroy them instantly and they will not be able to recover.

16 Yahweh absolutely hates six, no, seven things:

17 being proud, speaking falsely,
someone murdering a person who has not done anything wrong,

18 someone planning ways to act sinfully,
someone eagerly looking for ways to act wickedly,

19 someone who naturally lies when testifying,
and someone causing members of the same family to argue.

20 My child, be mindful to obey what I, your father, have commanded you.

Indeed, obey the rules that your mother has commanded.

21 Remember what we have taught you as if it were always a part of you.

Indeed, remember these lessons as if you wore them like a necklace.

22 The wise things that we have taught you will help you to know what you should do as you go about each day.

They will cause you to be safe when you sleep.

When you wake up in the morning, they will be what will continue to instruct you.

23 This is so because what I have commanded you is like a lamp that shows you your way.

Indeed, the rules we taught you are like a light to guide you.

When we rebuke you while instructing you, we do that so that you can do what will give you a good life.

24 We taught you these lessons in order to prevent you from going to wicked women,

and to prevent you from believing the seductive talk of immoral women.

25 Do not think lustfully about her beautiful body.

Do not let her seduce you by the flirtatious way she looks at you.

26 Do not do so because, although having sex with a prostitute may only cost you a cheap meal,

doing so with an adulterous married woman will cause you to die.

27 A man cannot hold fire against his chest without burning his clothes!

28 No one can walk on burning coals without blistering his feet!

29 It is similar with anyone who has sex with another man's wife.

People will certainly punish anyone who does that.

30 People do not resent someone who steals if he only steals food because he is hungry.

31 Nevertheless, if people catch thieves, those thieves must pay back seven times as much as they stole to those from whom they stole.

They may have to give everything that they own in order to repay what they stole.

32 By contrast, a man who acts adulterously with a woman is not thinking.

By doing this, he destroys himself!

33 The woman's husband will injure him,
people will despise him,
and he will always be ashamed.

34 This is so because the jealous husband will become furious.
He will act mercilessly when he revenges himself on the man who acted adulterously with his wife.

35 That jealous husband will not accept any money to stop being furious,
no matter how much money you offer him.

7

1 My son, obey what I have told you.
Carefully remember the things that I have commanded you.

2 Do what I have commanded you, so that you will live long and well.
Consider the rules I have taught you to be the most precious things that you possess.

3 Constantly remind yourself of the things that I have commanded you.
Memorize them!

4 Love what is wise as if it were your sister.
Indeed, love what you should understand as if it were a close relative.

5 Do this so that you will be able to stay away from adulterous women,
and stay away from immoral women who speak to you seductively.

6 I was once standing near the window in my house,
and I looked down from above the street through the shutters on the window.

7 Then I observed someone among the naive people.
I noticed among the youths a young man who does not think wisely.

8 He walked down the street near the corner of the road where the adulterous woman dwells.
Then he walked on the path toward her house.

9 (It was the time of day when night begins, and then it became dark.)

10 Then I saw that an adulterous woman approached the young man.
She was wearing a prostitute's clothing and intended to deceive the young man.

11 (That woman spoke loudly and acted rebelliously.

She never stayed at home.

12 She **often** walked around the streets and public places.

At the corner of any road she waited **for a man whom she could seduce**.)

13 When **she saw the young man**, she firmly took hold of him and kissed him.

She shamelessly told **him**,

14 "Today **I have meat in my house, because** I sacrificed an animal **in the temple** to promise friendship **with Yahweh**.

In this way I did what I had vowed to do.

15 So I have come out here to meet you.

I have come out to look everywhere for you, and now I have found you!

16 I have covered my bed with expensive Egyptian fabric.

17 I have put pleasant-smelling perfumes on my bed:

myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

18 Come **with me**! Let us satisfy ourselves sexually all night!

Let us enjoy ourselves sexually!

19 **Come with me** because my husband is not at home.

He has gone away on a long journey.

20 He filled a bag with money and took it with him.

He will not return home until the middle of the month."

21 **Thus** that adulterous woman persuaded the young man by speaking many persuasive things;

by speaking seductively she allured him **into doing what she wanted him to do**.

22 He quickly followed her **to her home**.

He **unknowingly** went to die like an ox going to the place where its owner will kill it.

He unknowingly went to die like a foolish person who lets others lead him by a chain to where they will punish him

23 until **someone kills him by** shooting an arrow into his entrails.

He was as foolish as a bird flying quickly into a trap.

He did not realize that going with the adulterous woman would cause him to die.

24 So now, children, listen to what I say!

Carefully pay attention to what I have spoken to you!

25 Do not desire to be with any adulterous woman.

Indeed, never go with one of them!

26 **Do not do so** because they have ruined the lives of many men.

It would be difficult to count all of the men that they have caused to die!

27 **Going to** an adulterous woman's house is like choosing to become a dead person.

Those who enter her bedroom will die as a result.

8

1 Imagine that there is a woman who represents everything that is wise. Surely such a woman calls out **to everyone**.

Indeed, imagine that this woman represents everything that people should understand.

Surely such a woman shouts **these things to people**.

2 Imagine that this woman stands at the highest place next to the crowded crossroads **where everyone can hear her**.

3 Imagine that this woman shouts loudly beside the gates at the entrance to a city.

4 **Imagine that she proclaims:** "I am calling out to all of you!

I am speaking to all people!

5 You naive people must learn to be prudent.

You foolish people must learn how to be discerning.

6 Listen **to what I say**, because I will tell you some excellent things.

I will speak to you about what is right.

7 **Listen to what I say** because I speak what is true.

I detest speaking what is evil.

8 Everything that I say is honest.

I do not say anything that is false or that deceives **people**.

9 Everything that I say is plain for people who understand.

Everything that I say is right to people who have become knowledgeable.

10 Choose **to learn** what I instruct you instead of silver.

Indeed, **choose to learn** what you should know instead of the finest gold.

11 **Do this** because being wise is more valuable than having precious jewels.

Being wise is more valuable than anything that you can desire.

12 I am what is wise. I am a close relative to what is prudent.

I enable people to know how to decide things intelligently.

13 Everyone who reverently fears Yahweh hates what is evil.

I**, what is wise,** hate it when people are proud or arrogant.

I hate it when people act wickedly and when people speak perversely.

14 I advise people well and enable them to be truly wise.

I am what people need in order to understand how things truly are.

I strengthen people.

15 I enable kings to rule **well**.

I enable rulers to make righteous laws.

16 I enable princes and nobles to govern **well**.

I enable every royal official who judges righteously **to do so**.

17 **I am what is wise, and** I benefit anyone who loves me.

Anyone who earnestly tries to become wise will succeed.

18 I enable people to become rich and I cause people to honor those people.

I enable people to have riches that will last and **I enable people to become** righteous.

19 What I can give people is more valuable than even the purest gold and the best silver.

20 I **always** do what is righteous and just

21 in order to give property to people who love me.

I will fill up the places where they store valuable items.

22 Yahweh had me**, what is wise,** when he began to create **everything**.

Indeed, he had me before he started doing that.

23 Yahweh established me a very long time ago—at the very beginning, before the world existed.

24 Yahweh revealed me before the oceans existed

and before there were springs abounding with water.

25 Yahweh revealed me before he made the mountains **and** before **he made** the hills.

26 **Yahweh revealed me** before he made the land or the fields or the first particles of dirt on the earth.

27 I was there when Yahweh made the sky,

and when he made the boundary between the sky and the ocean's surface.

28 **I was there** when Yahweh made the clouds above **the earth**,

and when he made the springs flow at the bottom of the ocean.

29 **I was there** when Yahweh set boundaries for the seas,

so that the water **in the seas** would not go past the boundaries that he commanded.

I was there when Yahweh made the parts supporting the dry land.

30 At that time I was **like** someone who was beside Yahweh, skillfully helping him to create **everything**.

I made him happy every day.

I was always rejoicing when I was with him.

31 **I was** rejoicing in the whole world that Yahweh had made.

I was also happy with the people **he had made**.

32 So now, children, pay attention to what I say!

Do this because anyone who obeys my teachings will be happy.

33 Listen to what I teach **you**, so that you will become wise.

Think about what I teach you!

34 People who listen to me will be happy.

People who are as eager to listen to me as if they were waiting **for me** at the door of my house every day

and watching for me to come out **will be happy**.

35 **This is true** because people who learn to be wise will live **well**,

and Yahweh will approve of them.

36 But those who refuse to be wise hurt themselves.

All those who hate to be wise **act like they are people who** would love to die."

9 **1** Continue imagining that there is a woman who represents everything that is wise. Imagine that this woman has built her own **spacious** house

and made seven pillars to support its roof.

2 Imagine that she has prepared a meal for guests.

She has prepared the meat to eat and wine to drink.

She has fully prepared her table for a meal.

3 Imagine that this woman has sent out her maids to invite her dinner guests.

Then she calls out at the highest place in the city where everyone can hear her.

4 She tells those who are not wise,

"Come into my house, all you naive people!

5 Come to me! Eat the food that I have prepared,

and drink the wine that I have prepared.

6 Stop acting naively so that you can live well.

Do what will cause you to learn what you should understand.

7 If you try to teach someone who ridicules other people, that person will ridicule you.

If you correct an evil person, that person will hurt you.

8 So do not correct a person who ridicules other people. If you do so, then that person will hate you.

However, if you correct a wise person, that person will love you for doing so.

9 If you instruct wise people, then they will become even wiser.

If you teach righteous people, then they will learn even more.

10 If you want to be wise, you must start by revering Yahweh,

and only by knowing what is holy will you understand which teachings are wise and true.

11 Surely being wise will cause you to live for many more years.

12 Any wise person benefits himself from being wise,

just as anyone who ridicules other people will personally suffer for doing so."

13 Foolish women speak loudly,

act naively, and are very ignorant.

14 They sit at the doors of the places where they dwell.

They sit on seats at the highest place in the city where everyone can hear them.

15 They sit there in order to call out to the people who are walking past them.

They call out to those walking down the road, who are only concerned about where they are going.

16 They tell those who are not wise,

"Come into my house, all you naive people!

17 Come to me, because having sex with someone to whom you are not married is as sweet as water that you have stolen.

Indeed, it is as delicious as food that you eat all by yourself."

18 But men who go to the houses of such women are not aware that the men who have gone there before have died.

They are not aware that the guests of such women are now in the deepest parts of the place where dead people are.

10

1 These are more wise sayings said by Solomon:

Wise children make their fathers glad,

but foolish children make their mothers sad.

2 Riches that people acquire by acting wickedly will not benefit them,

but people who act righteously prevent themselves from dying too soon.

3 Yahweh prevents righteous people from starving,

but he prevents wicked people from getting what they want.

4 People who are lazy become poor,

but people who work hard become rich.

5 Sons who collect crops at the right time are insightful,

but sons who sleep during the time to harvest crops are shameful.

6 God blesses righteous people,

but what wicked people say sometimes prevents others from knowing about the violent acts that they do.

7 People will be happy when they remember righteous people,

but people will forget wicked people as if they were something that decays and disappears.

8 People who think wisely are willing to obey the good things that people tell them to do,

but people who speak foolishly destroy themselves.

9 People who behave honestly will live safely;
but God will catch people who behave deceitfully.
10 People who gesture with their eyes **to deceive others** hurt **people**,
and people who speak foolishly destroy themselves.
11 What righteous people say is like a spring that enables people to live long and well;
but what wicked people say prevents others from knowing about the violent acts **that they do**.
12 When people hate others, they argue with each other;
but when people love others, they forgive people for the wrong things that they do.
13 Discerning people say what is wise,
but someone must punish people who do not think wisely.
14 Wise people continue to learn all that they can,
but when foolish people speak, they start to destroy things.
15 What rich people own keeps them safe like a strong wall keeps a city safe,
but poor people suffer much because they are poor.
16 God rewards righteous people by allowing them to live **for a long time**,
but God recompenses wicked people by punishing them for sinning.
17 People who heed what is instructive will live for a long time;
but people who do not let others correct them do what will destroy them.
18 People who hate **others** but pretend that they do not **hate them** speak falsely.
People who slander others are foolish.
19 People who talk a lot sin a lot;
but people who refrain from speaking **unnecessarily** are wise.
20 What righteous people say is **as valuable as** the best silver;
but what wicked people think is worthless.
21 What righteous people say benefits many people,
but foolish people die because they do not think wisely.
22 When people become wealthy, **it is because** Yahweh has blessed them,
and working harder will not make them to become wealthier.

23 Foolish people enjoy doing the wicked things that they planned **to do**,
but sensible people enjoy doing what is wise.
24 Wicked people will experience what frightens them;
but righteous people will receive what they want.
25 When something disastrous happens, it destroys wicked people,
but righteous people are **like** a foundation that lasts forever.
26 Lazy people irritate people who send them **to do something for them**,
like vinegar irritates teeth and smoke irritates eyes.
27 People who revere Yahweh will live for a long time,
but wicked people will live for only a short time.
28 What righteous people hope for will make them joyful,
but what wicked people hope for will not happen.
29 Yahweh protects honest people like a fortress because they live the way that he directs people to live,
but not living that way destroys people who act sinfully.
30 Righteous people will always be secure,
but wicked people will never live in our land.
31 Righteous people say what is wise,
but Yahweh will stop people from speaking who speak perversely.
32 Righteous people know good things to say,
but wicked people **continually** say things that are not true.

11 **1** Yahweh detests **people** using weighing instruments in order to deceive others,
but it pleases him when people use correct weights **on their weighing instruments**.
2 When people act proudly, they will soon disgrace themselves,
but humble people are wise.
3 Upright people know what to do because they are honest,
but being deceitful will ruin treacherous people.
4 What people own will not help them when Yahweh punishes **wicked people**,
but he will not kill those who live righteously.

5 Being righteous will cause innocent people to live securely,
but being wicked will ruin those who act wickedly.
6 Being righteous will cause people who act uprightly to escape **harm**,
but desiring **bad** things will cause people who act treacherously to trap themselves.
7 When wicked people die, what they hoped for never happens;
they hoped that being strong would benefit them, but it will not.
8 Yahweh rescues righteous people from becoming distressed;
but wicked people will become distressed instead.
9 People who reject God ruin other people by what they say,
but what righteous people know will cause them to escape.
10 People in a city rejoice when the righteous people **there** prosper,
and they shout joyously when wicked people die.
11 A city becomes great when people who act uprightly bless **the people there**,
but what people who act wickedly say destroys that city.
12 People who **openly** detest someone they know are not thinking wisely;
but understanding people say nothing.
13 People who go around gossiping tell **others** what is secret,
but trustworthy people will keep a matter private.
14 Not having anyone to guide a group of people will ruin them,
but having many people to advise them will keep that group secure.
15 People who guarantee **to pay a debt** for someone they do not know will surely suffer,
but people who avoid agreeing **to do such a thing** will be safe.
16 People honor a gracious woman,
but cruel men **only** get wealth.
17 People who are faithfully kind greatly benefit themselves,
but cruel people hurt themselves.
18 People who act wickedly falsely believe that they have gained **something good**,
but God truly rewards people who do what is right.
19 People who truly act righteously will live **well**,

but people who eagerly do what is evil will die.

20 Yahweh detests people who think deceitfully,
but people who act blamelessly please him.

21 It is certain that Yahweh will punish wicked people,
and that he will not punish those who belong to the righteous group.

22 **It is as unsuitable for** a beautiful woman to refuse to act discreetly
as it is for a pig to have a gold ring in its snout.

23 When righteous people get what they want, it results in only good things,
but when wicked people get what they hope for, it results in **Yahweh** being angry.

24 Some people generously share **what they have with others** but they receive even more.
Other people keep more **of what they have** than they should keep, but they still become poor.

25 People who generously bless others will prosper;
and people who generously give others what the others need will also receive everything that they need.

26 People curse anyone who **selfishly** hoards grain **instead of selling it**,
but they bless people who sell it **when others need it**.

27 If you sincerely want to do what is right, people will treat you well,
but evil things happen to people who try to do what is evil.

28 People who depend on their money will not be successful,
but righteous people will thrive like a green plant.

29 People who trouble their families will not inherit anything,
and people who act foolishly will serve people who think wisely.

30 What righteous people say and do is **like** a tree **with fruit** that keeps people alive,
and people who persuade others **to be righteous** are wise.

31 Pay attention! Righteous people on the earth will get what they deserve;
but even more so, wicked, sinful people will **also** get what they deserve!

12 **1** People who love other people correcting them **also** love **learning** what they should know.

But people who hate other people correcting them are foolish.

2 Yahweh approves of people who are good,
but he condemns people who plan to do what is evil.

3 People do not become secure by acting wickedly,
but righteous people are **as secure as** a tree with immovable roots.

4 A virtuous wife causes people to praise her husband,
but a disgraceful wife **destroys her husband** like a disease that destroys his bones.

5 Righteous people plan **to treat people** fairly;
wicked people advise **people** in order to deceive **them**.

6 What wicked people say **is like a trap that** kills people **who pass by**;
but what upright people say will enable them to escape.

7 Yahweh destroys wicked people and they disappear,
but the families of righteous people will continue.

8 People will praise someone according to how insightful that person is,
but people will despise someone who thinks perversely.

9 It is better to be a lowly person yet have a servant
than to think that you are important yet have no food.

10 Righteous people care for their animals,
but even when wicked people **think that they** act compassionately, they act cruelly.

11 People who work hard will have enough food **to eat**,
but people who waste time doing worthless things do not think wisely.

12 Wicked people want what evil people steal,
but righteous people benefit **others** like a tree with deep roots.

13 The sinful things that wicked people say will destroy them,
but righteous people escape from trouble.

14 The **good** things that people say **to others** will **also** satisfy them with what is good;
what people work hard to accomplish will **also** benefit them.

15 Foolish people **always** think that what they are doing is right;
but wise people listen to what other people advise **them to do**.

16 People know immediately when foolish people are angry;
but smart people ignore it when someone disrespects them.
17 People who naturally say what is true speak righteously,
but witnesses who say what is false speak deceitfully.
18 When people speak without thinking **about what to say**, they hurt others like someone who stabs people with a sword,
but what wise people say helps people heal.
19 What people say truthfully will last forever,
but what people say falsely will **only** last for a moment.
20 People who plan to act evilly think deceitfully,
but people who advise others to act peacefully will be joyful.
21 Bad things **usually** do not happen to righteous people,
but wicked people will experience many bad things.
22 Yahweh detests people who speak falsely,
but people who act faithfully please him.
23 Smart people do not reveal **all of** what they know,
but foolish people shout out foolish things.
24 People who work hard will reign **over others**,
but lazy people will become forced laborers.
25 When people worry, they feel sad,
but when others speak kindly to them, it causes them to be cheerful again.
26 Righteous people guide their friends **in the right way to live**,
but by living wickedly, wicked people destroy themselves.
27 Lazy people do not even cook the animals that they catch,
but people who work hard value their possessions.
28 People who do what is righteous will live.
Indeed, people who do so will not die.

13 **1** Wise children pay attention when their fathers instruct them,
but people who ridicule **other people** do not pay attention when people correct **them**.

2 The good things that people say are like good food to them,
and the violent things that treacherous people do are like food for them.
3 People who are careful about what they say enable themselves to stay alive,
but people who speak carelessly destroy themselves.
4 Lazy people want things very much and get very little,
but people who work hard will receive everything that they want.
5 Righteous people detest speaking falsely,
but what wicked people do is disgusting and disgraceful.
6 Acting righteously enables people who act blamelessly to be safe,
but acting wickedly causes sinful people to do what will destroy them.
7 Some people act as if they are wealthy while they are actually poor.
Other people act as if they are poor while they are actually wealthy.
8 Rich people might have to pay money to someone who threatens them in order to stay alive,
but poor people do not even listen when someone threatens them.
9 Righteous people live joyfully like a light that shines brightly,
but wicked people will merely die like an oil lamp that stops burning oil.
10 People who act proudly cause people to argue,
but people who let others advise them cause people to be wise.
11 Riches that people gain effortlessly will disappear,
but people who gain riches by working steadily will increase their riches.
12 People despair when they do not receive what they have been hoping to receive,
but when people receive what they have been wanting to receive, they feel like they have everything that they need.
13 People who detest what others try to teach them will suffer for doing so,
but God will reward those people who respect what he has commanded.
14 What wise people teach continuously benefits people throughout their lives.
It enables people to avoid dangerous things that could kill them.
15 People approve of people who are very insightful,
but treacherous people are stubborn in the way that they live.
16 All clever people think carefully before they do something,

but foolish people show that they are foolish by how they act.

17 Bad things happen to messengers who are not reliable,
but reliable messengers make people peaceful.

18 People who do not let other people correct them will become poor and ashamed,
but people respect those who let other people rebuke them for any bad behavior.

19 People feel pleasant when they get what they want,
but foolish people detest refusing to do what is evil.

20 People who associate with wise people will become wise themselves,
but people who are companions of foolish people will suffer.

21 Bad things happen to sinful people,
but good things happen to righteous people.

22 Good people will leave riches for their grandchildren when they die,
but righteous people will receive the riches that sinful people have saved.

23 Poor people have fields that can produce a lot of food,
but unjust people take it away from them.

24 Parents who do not punish their children for bad behavior act as if they hate their children,
but parents who truly love their children are careful to discipline them.

25 Righteous people have enough food to eat and satisfy themselves,
but wicked people will be hungry.

14

1 The wisest women help their families to thrive,
but foolish women ruin their families by the foolish things that they do.

2 People who behave uprightly show that they greatly revere Yahweh,
but people who behave deceptively show that they detest Yahweh.

3 What foolish people say causes others to punish them for being proud,
but what wise people say protects them.

4 If a man has no oxen to plow his field, he does not need to put grain in their feedbox,
but if he has oxen, they will enable him to produce an abundant crop.

5 Honest witnesses do not lie,
but dishonest witnesses lie easily.
6 People who ridicule **other people** try to become wise and fail to do so,
but people who understand **what is right** learn things easily.
7 If you associate with foolish people,
you will not learn **anything** from knowledgeable people.
8 People who have good sense know that it is wise to understand **the consequences of** what they do,
but stupid people deceive **themselves and others**, which is foolish.
9 Foolish people scorn people who make amends with Yahweh after sinning,
but Yahweh approves of people who do what is right.
10 Only you truly know how miserable you are,
and only you truly know how joyful you are.
11 The families of wicked people will die out,
but the families of upright people will thrive.
12 There is a way to do things that is easy and convenient for people,
but in the end, doing things that way will cause them to die.
13 People who are laughing may still be suffering,
and people who feel joyful may ultimately feel sad.
14 People who refuse **to live righteously** will receive **from Yahweh** what they deserve **from living that way**;
and good people **will also receive from Yahweh** what they deserve **from living the good way**.
15 Naive people believe whatever people say,
but smart people think carefully about what they do.
16 Wise people are careful and avoid doing things that annoy **others**,
but foolish people confidently interfere **in other people's business**.
17 People who quickly become angry act foolishly,
and people hate those who plan to do evil things.
18 Naive people only acquire foolish habits,
but the reward for clever people is what they know.

19 Some day evil people will respectfully bow in front of good people,
and wicked people will bow at the doors of the houses where righteous people dwell.
20 Even the friends of poor people despise them,
but rich people have many friends.
21 It is sinful to despise your poor neighbors,
but God is pleased with those who do kind things for poor people.
22 People who plan to act wickedly are surely doing the wrong thing with their lives,
but people who plan to do what is good are faithful and trustworthy people.
23 If people work hard, they will gain from it,
but if people only talk, they will remain poor.
24 A reward of being wise is to become rich,
but because stupid people are foolish, they only become more foolish.
25 Truthful witnesses save people from dying,
but deceptive people tell lies that cause harm to people.
26 People who revere Yahweh are completely confident that he will protect them.
Yahweh will also protect their children.
27 Reverently fearing Yahweh is like having a refreshing spring that enables people to live well.
It enables people to avoid what could kill them.
28 Kings who rule over many people are glorious,
but kings who have no people to rule over have nothing.
29 People who do not become angry quickly are very wise,
but people who become angry quickly show everyone how foolish they are.
30 Feeling peaceful makes a person's body healthy,
but envying others makes a person's body unhealthy, like something that rots a person's bones.
31 People who make poor people suffer ridicule Yahweh, who made them,
but people who are kind to needy people respect Yahweh.
32 Wicked people destroy themselves by doing evil things,

but righteous people are safe even when they die.

33 Understanding people think wisely,
but when one is among foolish people what is wise is especially obvious.

34 Acting righteously makes a country great,
but acting sinfully disgraces communities.

35 Insightful servants please their kings,
but kings are furious with servants who act disgracefully.

15 1 Replying gently to angry people will calm them,
but speaking harshly to them will make them angrier.

2 What wise people say makes others want to know more,
but foolish people constantly say what is foolish.

3 Yahweh sees everything that is happening;
he observes both evil people and good people.

4 What people say soothingly is like a tree with fruit that enables people to live well,
but what people say deceitfully makes people despair.

5 Foolish people detest what their fathers say to correct them,
but people who let others rebuke them are clever.

6 Righteous people have houses that contain a lot of riches,
but what wicked people gain disrupts them.

7 What wise people say informs others of what they should know,
but what foolish people think does not do that.

8 Yahweh detests the sacrifices that wicked people offer to him,
but he delights in the prayers of upright people.

9 Yahweh detests what wicked people do,
but he loves people who diligently try to do what is right.

10 Yahweh will severely punish people who refuse to live righteously,
and people who refuse to let other people correct them will perish.

11 Yahweh knows everything about the place where dead people are,
so he surely knows everything that everyone thinks!

12 People who ridicule others despise anyone who corrects them;
they avoid wise people.
13 People smile when they are happy,
but feeling sad can make people despair.
14 Sensible people are always trying to learn more,
but foolish people satisfy themselves with what is foolish.
15 People who suffer experience bad things every day,
but cheerful people live as though they are always feasting.
16 Being poor while reverently fearing Yahweh
is better than being rich while worrying.
17 It is better for someone to have a small meal of vegetables with people who love each other
than to have a large meal of good meat with people who hate each other.
18 People who easily become angry cause people to argue,
but people who do not easily become angry will help people to be peaceful.
19 Lazy people are **unproductive** like people walking through thorny plants,
but upright people are **productive like people** walking on a level road.
20 Wise sons and daughters make their parents happy,
but any sons or daughters who detest their parents are foolish.
21 People who are not wise enjoy acting foolishly,
but understanding people do what is right.
22 People will not accomplish what they plan to do if there is no one to advise them **well**,
but when many people advise them **well**, they will succeed.
23 People rejoice when they answer someone aptly.
It is so good to say something at the right time!
24 Insightful people live in a way that causes their lives to become increasingly better,
in order for them to avoid living in a way that would result in dying.
25 Yahweh will destroy what proud people own,
but he protects the **few** things that widows own.

26 Yahweh detests the evil things that people think,
but the pleasing things that people say are pure.
27 People who gain wealth in an unjust manner trouble their families,
but people who refuse bribes will live **in a better way**.
28 Righteous people think carefully about how to reply to people,
but wicked people quickly say what is evil.
29 Yahweh does not listen to **what** wicked people **request him to do**,
but he listens **and responds** when righteous people pray **to him**.
30 People feel happy when they see someone smile,
and people feel healthy when they hear something good.
31 People who begin to behave in a more life-giving way when others rebuke them **for behaving badly** show that they belong to the group of wise people.
32 People who refuse to let others correct them **act as if they** despise themselves,
but people who listen when others rebuke them think wisely.
33 Revering Yahweh teaches people to be wise,
and people must be humble before other people can respect them.

16 **1** People plan what they want **to say**,
but Yahweh determines how they will **actually** speak.
2 People think that everything that they do is right,
but Yahweh knows why people do what they do.
3 Entrust what you do to Yahweh,
and he will make what you plan **to do** succeed.
4 When Yahweh made everything, he planned what would happen to each thing.
He has even made wicked people for the time when he will punish them.
5 Yahweh detests all proud people;
he will certainly punish them.
6 Be loyal to Yahweh and faithfully obey him; if you do that, he will forgive you for having sinned.
People who revere Yahweh will avoid doing what is evil.
7 When Yahweh approves of what people do,

he even causes their enemies to be peaceful with them.

8 It is better **for someone** to have **just** a few things while being righteous,
than **for someone** to have a lot of crops while being unjust.

9 People plan what they want to do,
but Yahweh determines what they will **actually** do.

10 Kings speak for God;
when kings judge, they must **always** speak justly.

11 Yahweh made accurate weighing instruments **for us to use honestly**.
Indeed, he made all the stones in the **weighing** bag **so that we would use them honestly**.

12 Kings **should** detest any wicked thing that people do
because acting righteously causes kings to rule securely.

13 **Ideally,** kings enjoy hearing people speak honestly.
Indeed, they love people who say what is true.

14 When kings are angry, they cause people to die,
so wise people will appease them.

15 When kings are happy, they let people live;
when they approve of people, it is as refreshing as rain in springtime.

16 Becoming wise is better than having gold.
Indeed, it is better to choose to become understanding than to have silver.

17 Upright people act in a way that avoids doing what is evil;
people who want to stay alive are careful about what they do.

18 Being proud causes people to destroy themselves.
Indeed, being arrogant causes people to ruin themselves.

19 It is better to live humbly among poor people
than to **live proudly and** receive some of what proud people have taken from others.

20 People who act prudently in a matter will succeed,
and people who trust in Yahweh are happy.

21 People will call those who think wisely, “understanding ones,”
and people who speak pleasantly are able to teach others effectively.

22 Being insightful allows a person to live well continually,
but foolish people can only teach others to be foolish.
23 What wise people think causes them to speak insightfully,
and what those people say causes others to learn.
24 The pleasing things that people say are like a honeycomb:
They cause people to feel pleasant and healthy.
25 There is a way to do things that is easy and convenient for people,
but in the end, doing things that way will cause them to die.
26 Being hungry helps working people work
because wanting to eat motivates people to keep on working.
27 Worthless people plot how to hurt others;
the evil things they say harm others like fire burns people.
28 Perverse people cause other people to argue with each other,
and people who gossip about others cause friends to stop being friends.
29 Violent people tempt other people to sin,
and they guide them to behave wickedly.
30 People who use their eyes to signal to others are planning to do something perverse;
people who use their lips to signal to others are about to do the evil thing that they had planned to do.
31 The gray hair that old people have is like an honorable crown on their heads;
they achieve it by living righteously.
32 It is better to be someone who does not become angry quickly than to be powerful.
It is better to control oneself than to be as powerful as someone who conquers a city.
33 People throw lots in order to decide what to do,
but Yahweh decides whatever happens.

17 **1** It is better for someone to have a little stale food to eat while living peacefully
than for someone to live in a house where people frequently eat large meals while arguing with each other.

2 An insightful slave will become the boss of a disgraceful son **of his master**,
and that slave will inherit a portion **of his master's property** along with his master's sons.

3 People put silver and gold into very hot furnaces **to burn out what is impure**,
and Yahweh tests what people are thinking and desiring to do **in a similar manner**.

4 People who act wickedly listen carefully when people speak what is sinful;
people who lie pay attention when people say things that destroy **others**.

5 People who ridicule poor people despise Yahweh, who made them;
Yahweh will certainly punish people who rejoice when other people experience disastrous things.

6 Old people are proud of their grandchildren,
and children are proud of their parents.

7 It is not fitting for worthless people to speak eloquently.
It is even less fitting for royal officials to speak falsely!

8 People who pay bribes think that bribes are magical;
by paying bribes, they think that everything that they do will be successful.

9 If you want people to love you, forgive them for the wrong things that they have done to you.
If you continue to remind them about those **wrong** things, they will no longer be your friends.

10 Rebuking sensible people once causes them to learn
more than hitting foolish people a hundred times **causes them to learn**.

11 Evil people only want to rebel,
so a merciless messenger will come and punish them.

12 A mother bear who is furious because someone has stolen her cubs is dangerous,
but it can be more dangerous to confront a foolish person who is doing something foolish.

13 If someone does bad things to people who have done good things to him,
then bad things will always happen to his family.

14 When people start arguing with each other, it is **as difficult to stop as it is to stop** water that is leaking out **of a dam**,
so prevent yourself from arguing before you start to argue.
15 There are people who acquit guilty people,
and there are people who condemn innocent people;
Yahweh detests both types of people.
16 How useless it is for foolish people to try to pay money in order to become wise
when they are unable to think!
17 A friend loves **you** all the time,
and relatives exist in order to help **other relatives** when disastrous things happen.
18 People who do not think wisely agree to pay someone else's loan
and even guarantee to pay that loan in front of people whom they know.
19 People who love to sin **also** love to cause people to argue;
people who brag a lot cause others to destroy them.
20 People who think deceitfully will not experience good things,
and bad things will happen to people who speak deceitfully.
21 Foolish people grieve their parents.
Indeed, worthless people will cause their parents to be very sad.
22 Being cheerful helps the body to heal,
but being discouraged makes the body weak.
23 Wicked people accept bribes that people give to them secretly,
so that they will decide matters unfairly.
24 Understanding people concentrate on what is wise,
but foolish people cannot concentrate on anything.
25 Foolish children grieve their fathers
and make their mothers miserable.
26 Punishing innocent people is surely very bad,
and flogging noble people **would be just as** wrong.
27 People who refrain from speaking **unnecessarily** are knowledgeable,
and people who can remain calm are **truly** wise.

28 People will think even foolish people are wise if those foolish people do not speak.

Indeed, if fools refrain from speaking people will consider them to be insightful.

18

1 People who avoid other people only care about doing what they want to do.

They refuse to do anything that is wise.

2 Foolish people hate learning.

Instead, they only want to tell others what they think.

3 People treat wicked people contemptuously,

and people scold people who act shamefully.

4 What wise people say is as profound as a deep ocean.

Wise people are always saying wise things, like a fountain that flows in a constant stream.

5 It is very evil for judges to favor guilty people

in order to prevent judging innocent people justly.

6 What foolish people say makes people argue,

and it makes people want to beat them.

7 What foolish people say will ruin them.

Indeed, what they say may cause them to die, as a trap may cause an animal to die.

8 People are eager to listen to what people who gossip say,

and what they say deeply affects those who hear it.

9 People who are lazy when they work

are like people who destroy things.

10 Yahweh is like a strong tower

that righteous people run into and are safe.

11 Rich people think that what they own keeps them safe like walls keep cities safe;

they think that what they own protects them as well as a high wall.

12 Before people ruin themselves, they have first become proud;

and before people will respect someone, that person must become humble.

13 It is foolish and shameful

for someone to reply to what a person has said before hearing it.

14 When someone is inwardly strong, he can endure being sick.

However, when someone is inwardly weak and depressed, it is very difficult to make the person feel better!

15 Understanding people are always learning more.

Indeed, wise people are always trying to learn more.

16 Giving something **to someone** can benefit the one who gives it;

doing so can enable that person to meet important people.

17 People who state their cases first seem to be right

until people whom they know arrive and question them.

18 Throwing lots **in order to decide something** can make people stop arguing,

it can also decide who is right between powerful people.

19 It is more difficult to reconcile with a relative **whom you have** offended than **to conquer** a fortified city;

and when people argue, they avoid each other as if a castle's strong gate were between them.

20 What people say will satisfy them when they are hungry.

Indeed, what people say will satisfy them.

21 What people say can cause people to die or to remain alive.

So people who are skillful at talking will strongly influence what happens to themselves **and to others**.

22 A man who marries a **good** wife will experience good things,

and Yahweh approves of them.

23 Poor people plead for others to be merciful **to them**, but rich people reply **to them** rudely.

24 Having companions **who only seem to be true friends** will destroy a person,

but there is a type of friend who loves us and is more loyal than any brother.

19

1 It is better to be poor and behave honestly

than to speak deceitfully and be foolish.

2 Furthermore, it is very bad for people to be enthusiastic **about doing something** while not knowing **anything about it**;

people who act hastily do things wrong.

3 People who act foolishly destroy themselves,

yet they become furious with Yahweh **and blame him**.

4 Wealthy people **easily** make many friends,

but when people become poor, they lose **even** the friends they have.

5 Someone will surely punish lying witnesses.

Indeed, someone will surely punish people who lie easily.

6 A lot of people want royal officials to favor them,

and many people want to be friends with people who give gifts.

7 All the relatives of poor people despise them,

and even their friends avoid them!

Although they call out **to them for help**, they do not **respond**.

8 People who love to learn benefit themselves;

people who are consistently sensible will surely succeed.

9 Someone will surely punish lying witnesses.

Indeed, people who lie easily will die.

10 It is wrong for foolish people to live luxuriously,

and it is even worse for slaves to reign over princes!

11 Insightful people do not get angry quickly,

and people show how honorable they are by forgiving **people who** sin **against them**.

12 When kings are furious, they frighten people like the roaring of young lions **frightens people**,

but when they approve of people, it is as refreshing **for the people** as dew **is** on plants.

13 Foolish children destroy their fathers,

and when wives argue **with their husbands**, it is **as annoying as** constantly dripping water.

14 People inherit houses and riches from their fathers,

but Yahweh **alone** gives **men** insightful wives.

15 Lazy people sleep well,

but such idle people are always hungry.

16 People who obey God's commandments stay alive,
but people who do not care about God's ways will die.

17 Giving things to poor people is like loaning them to Yahweh;
he will reward anyone who does this.

18 Discipline your children while they are young and you can expect them to learn to live in the right way.
If you do not discipline them, it is as though you want them to die.

19 Very angry people will pay for being angry;
so if you rescue them once from what they must pay, you will have to do that again and again.

20 Pay attention to what people advise you to do and let people teach you.
If you do so, you will become wise for the rest of your life.

21 People plan to do many things,
but only what Yahweh advises will succeed.

22 People want others to consider them to be faithful.
It is better to be poor than to be someone who lies.

23 Revering Yahweh causes people to live for a long time;
such people rest contentedly at night;
nothing will harm them.

24 Some people are so lazy that even though they have put their hands in a dish of food,
they will not even lift the food to their mouths.

25 If you punish people who ridicule others,
then naive people who see you do that will learn to be sensible.
If you correct understanding people,
then they will know even more.

26 Children who act violently toward their fathers and chase away their mothers
are disgraceful and embarrassing.

27 My child, if you want to become stupid,
then stop listening to what people teach you.

28 Worthless witnesses scorn what is just,
and wicked people enjoy acting sinfully as if they were gulping down delicious food.
29 Yahweh is ready to condemn people who ridicule others,
and he is ready to beat fools on their backs.

20 1 Drinking a lot of intoxicating drink causes people to start ridiculing and fighting others;
becoming drunk is very foolish.
2 When kings are terrifyingly angry, they frighten people like the roaring of young lions frightens people;
people who make kings angry cause themselves to die.
3 It is honorable to cease arguing with other people,
but all foolish people are eager to argue with others.
4 Lazy farmers do not plow their fields when they should plow their fields.
Then when it is time to harvest crops, they look for crops in their fields, but there are none.
5 Knowing what people are thinking and planning is as difficult as drawing water out of a deep well,
but discerning people are able to do so.
6 Many people claim that they are faithful individuals,
but very few people actually act faithfully!
7 Righteous people live honestly;
their children are very fortunate.
8 Ideally, kings who sit on their thrones in order to judge people
discern anything that is evil and remove it from their lands.
9 No one can truthfully say, "I do not think sinfully anymore; I do not sin anymore."
10 Yahweh detests people dishonestly using both weights that differ and measurements that differ to benefit themselves.
11 Even young people show others who they are by what they do;
how they act shows whether they are innocent and right or not.

12 Yahweh has made both ears with which to hear and eyes with which to see.

13 If you sleep a lot, you will become poor;

but if you stay awake and work, you will have plenty of food.

14 Buyers claim that something is not good at all when they are bargaining with the seller about its price.

But after they buy it, they go and boast to their friends about the good thing that they bought.

15 Gold and precious jewels are plentiful,

but the knowledgeable things that people say are rare and precious.

16 Take the coats of people who promise to pay a loan for someone whom they do not know.

Indeed, hold onto the coats of people who do so for a foreigner because those people are not likely to repay those loans.

17 Food that people get by deceiving others may taste sweet to them at first,

but later what they have done will be as unpleasant to them as having a mouth full of rocks.

18 When people give you good advice, if you do what they suggest, your plans will succeed.

Therefore, let others advise you before you start fighting a war.

19 People who walk around gossiping tell others what is secret,

so avoid people who speak carelessly.

20 People who curse their parents

will die like an oil lamp that stops burning oil in a totally dark place.

21 If people inherit property hastily before the proper time,

they will ultimately not receive any blessing from it.

22 Do not say that you will harm someone who has harmed you.

Rather, wait for Yahweh to resolve the matter, so that he may vindicate you.

23 Yahweh detests people dishonestly using differing weights to benefit themselves.

Indeed, using weighing instruments in order to deceive others is very bad.

24 Yahweh directs what happens even to powerful people.

So then, no one can comprehend what will happen to him!

25 It is dangerous for people to declare thoughtlessly that they will dedicate
something to Yahweh,
and then later regret that they have promised to do that.
26 Wise kings separate the wicked people from the good people
and then punish the wicked people severely.
27 Just as the light of a lamp penetrates into and illuminates a dark place, the life-
breath that Yahweh puts into each person penetrates into the person's inner
being.
That breath is like the presence of Yahweh, who sees everything that is inside
a person.
28 Being faithful and trustworthy makes kings safe.
Indeed, being faithful enables them to rule securely.
29 People admire young men because they are strong,
but people admire old men because they have become wise.
30 Flogging people for doing evil things can stop them from doing those evil things,
and hitting those people on the outside can change who they are on the inside.

21 1 Yahweh directs what kings think as a farmer directs streams of water
to make them go wherever he wants them to go.
2 People always think that what they do is right,
but Yahweh rightly evaluates why they do those things.
3 Doing what is right and fair is more acceptable to Yahweh
than sacrificing animals to him.
4 Being proud and arrogant guide what wicked people do like a lamp shows people
where to go;
they are sinful.
5 What diligent people plan will certainly profit them,
but all those who act too hastily will certainly become poor.
6 When people gain wealth by speaking falsely,
that wealth quickly vanishes like mist, and doing that will kill them.
7 When wicked people act violently, they cause others to punish them for it
because they refuse to do what is right.

8 Guilty people continually do what is wrong,
but innocent people do what is right.
9 It is better to live alone in a corner of a housetop
than to live inside a house with a wife who always argues with you.
10 Wicked people strongly desire to do what is evil,
they will not be merciful to the people around them.
11 If you punish people who ridicule others, then naive people who see you do that will become wise,
and if you teach wise people, they will become even more knowledgeable.
12 Righteous people are able to understand what the households of wicked people do;
they let the evil things that wicked people do happen to them.
13 People who refuse to listen to poor people when they cry out for help
will also cry out for help themselves, but no one will help them.
14 Secretly giving something to an angry person will stop him from being angry.
Indeed, secretly bribing a furious person will calm him down.
15 Righteous people are glad when people judge justly,
but judging justly terrifies people who act sinfully.
16 People who stop behaving sensibly
will soon go to the place where the spirits of dead people are.
17 People who love what is pleasurable will be poor.
Indeed, people who indulge themselves in wine and rich food will never be wealthy.
18 Wicked people will suffer instead of righteous people,
and treacherous people will suffer in place of upright people.
19 It is better to live alone in a desolate land
than to live with an argumentative and nagging wife.
20 Wise people store up precious riches and olive oil,
but foolish people waste everything that they have.
21 People who diligently try to be righteous and faithful
will live well, will be righteous, and people will respect them.

22 Wise people know how to conquer cities that mighty warriors are defending;
they can pull down the walls that people in those cities believe will protect them.
23 People who are careful about what they say
avoid becoming distressed.
24 People who ridicule others are proud and arrogant;
they behave furiously and presumptuously.
25 Lazy people want food, but they will die
because they refuse to work.
26 Lazy people always want more things for themselves,
but righteous people generously give what they have to others.
27 Yahweh detests the sacrifices that wicked people offer to him;
it is even more detestable when they are offering something to Yahweh while intending to act wickedly!
28 Witnesses who lie will die,
but when someone who listens carefully speaks, what he says will finish the matter.
29 Wicked people pretend to know what they are doing,
but upright people think about what they do.
30 Even the wisest and most knowledgeable counselor is nothing compared to Yahweh.
31 Soldiers prepare to fight,
but Yahweh determines who wins that fight.

22 1 Being someone whom people respect is more important than being very wealthy.
Indeed, being someone whom others approve of is better than having silver and gold.
2 Rich people and poor people have this in common:
Yahweh made all of them.
3 Sensible people observe something dangerous happening and avoid it,
but naive people just keep going and suffer for doing so.
4 People who are humble, who revere Yahweh,

will become rich, people will respect them, and they will live long and well.

5 Deceptive people live dangerously, as if they were walking down a road covered
with thorns and traps,

but people who want to stay alive avoid living that way.

6 Teach children how to behave properly,

so that when they become old, they will still continue to do so.

7 Rich people reign over poor people,

and people who borrow money from others become like slaves to the people
who loaned them money.

8 People who act unjustly will suffer for doing so,

and they will no longer be able to furiously oppress other people.

9 Yahweh will bless generous people

because they give some of their own food to poor people.

10 If you banish people who ridicule others, then people will stop arguing with each
other,

condemning each other, and shaming each other.

11 People who love being sincere and

speaking graciously are companions of kings.

12 Yahweh preserves true sayings,

but he makes what treacherous people say fail.

13 Lazy people as an excuse to not work claim that there is a lion outside that will
kill them in the street if they go outside.

14 What adulterous women say is as dangerous as a deep hole that men could fall
into;

those with whom Yahweh is angry will suffer from it.

15 Children naturally think foolishly,

but physically disciplining them will teach them to stop being foolish.

16 People who oppress poor people in order to make more money for themselves
or who give things to rich people in order to become rich will only become
poor.

17 Listen carefully to what wise people have said;

consider carefully what I am teaching you!

18 **Do this** because if you remember these sayings
and if you are always ready to repeat them **to others**,
then you will be glad.

19 I am teaching these sayings to you—yes, you—right now
so that you will trust Yahweh.

20 I am indeed writing these 30 sayings
to advise and teach you.

21 **I am writing them** in order to teach you what is true in trustworthy sayings,
and in order to answer those who sent you with trustworthy sayings.

22 Do not steal from poor people just because they are poor;
and do not oppress suffering people in court.

23 **Do not do these things** because Yahweh will defend those poor people when you dispute with them,
and he will kill the people who stole from them.

24 Do not become friends with angry people.
Indeed, do not associate with people who easily become angry.

25 **If you do so,** then you will act like them,
and you will endanger yourself like an animal caught in a trap.

26 Stay away from those people who agree to pay loans for others.
Indeed, stay away from those people who guarantee to pay the loans of others.

27 **Because** if you cannot pay back **the loan**,
then the person to whom you owe money will surely take away even your own bed **in order to pay back the loan**.

28 Do not cheat people by moving the stones that their ancestors placed long ago
to mark the boundaries of their land.

29 Consider this: People who work skillfully will serve kings
rather than serving unknown people.

23

1 When you sit down to eat **a meal** with someone who rules over others,
pay attention to the food that is in front of you.

2 Restrain yourself from eating too much
if you like eating a lot of food.
3 Do not crave the expensive food that the ruler has
because that ruler is using that food to deceive you.
4 Do not work so much that you exhaust yourself in order to become rich.
Be understanding enough to stop doing so.
5 As soon as you look at that wealth, it will surely be gone!
This is because wealth certainly disappears quickly as if it had wings
and flew off into the sky like a fast bird.
6 Do not eat food that stingy people give you.
Do not crave the expensive food that they have,
7 because stingy people are always thinking about how much the food costs them.
They will tell you to eat and drink,
but they do not mean what they say.
8 When you realize this, you will want to vomit what little food you ate.
You will have wasted the kind things you said to them.
9 Do not try to talk to foolish people
because they will only despise the insightful things that you say.
10 Do not cheat people by moving the old stones that mark the boundaries of their land.
Do not claim the land that belongs to defenseless orphans,
11 because Yahweh is the one who redeems them and he is powerful.
He is the one who will defend them when they dispute with you.
12 Consider carefully what people say when they correct you.
Indeed, listen carefully to what people teach you.
13 Do not refuse to discipline your children.
If you physically punish them, they will not die.
14 In fact, if you physically punish your children,
you will prevent them from dying.
15 My child, if you are wise,
then surely I myself will be very happy,

16 and I will be deeply joyful
when you say what is right.
17 Do not envy sinful people;
instead always revere Yahweh.
18 **If you do so, then** you will surely have a **good** future,
and what you hope will happen will indeed occur!
19 My child, listen **to me** so that you can become wise.
Make yourself think about behaving rightly.
20 Stay away from drunkards and gluttons,
21 because drunkards and gluttons will become poor.
They sleep so much that they will only have rags to wear.
22 Pay attention to your father, who enabled you to exist,
and continue to honor your mother when she becomes old.
23 Learn what is true and remember it.
Learn what is wise and instructive and what you should understand.
24 Fathers of righteous people are very joyful.
Indeed, those who father wise people are happy because of them.
25 So do what will make your parents happy!
Do what will make your mother joyful!
26 My son, pay close attention to me!
Carefully observe what I do!
27 **Do this** because prostitutes are as dangerous as a deep hole.
Indeed, **becoming involved with** an adulterous woman is as dangerous as **falling into** a well that you cannot escape from.
28 These very women certainly wait **for men to seduce** like robbers **wait for people to rob**.
They cause many men to become unfaithful.
29 These are the kind of people who are woeful, sorrowful, and quarrelsome,
who lament, get hurt for no reason,
and have red eyes:
30 those people who drink too much wine

and are always looking around for wine to drink that someone has prepared.

31 Do not let wine become overly attractive to you, even though it is beautifully red, glistens in the cup,

and goes down your throat smoothly.

32 Afterward you will feel as terrible as if a poisonous snake has bitten you.

33 When you are drunk, you will hallucinate,

and you will imagine distorted things.

34 You will feel dizzy and sick as if you were trying to sleep on a ship that the sea was tossing back and forth.

Indeed, you will feel as if you were trying to sleep while swaying at the top of a ship's sails.

35 You will say, "People hit me, but it did not hurt.

People beat me, but I did not feel it.

I wish I could be sober

so that I could find even more wine to drink again!"

24 1 Do not envy evil people;

do not want to associate with them,

2 because they plan to act violently,

and they talk about doing bad things to people.

3 People build households by acting wisely;

they make those households stable by acting sensibly.

4 By acting knowledgeably, people fill the rooms of those households

with all kinds of valuable and delightful riches.

5 Wise people are strong,

and knowledgeable people make themselves more powerful,

6 because letting people advise you will make you fight your war successfully,

and letting many people counsel you will rescue you from losing the war.

7 Foolish people cannot understand what is wise;

they have nothing useful to say in court.

8 Some people are always planning to do evil things;

people refer to them as schemers.

9 Foolish plans are sinful,

and people detest those who ridicule others.

10 If you give up during distressful times,

then you are weak.

11 Save people whom others are trying to kill;

save the ones who will certainly die unless you do something!

12 If you **falsely** claim that you did not know that those people were dying unjustly, then think about this:

Yahweh knows exactly what you are thinking and he understands **what you are doing**!

He is the one who keeps you alive and he knows **everything about you**!

He will surely make people receive what they deserve for whatever they have done or not done!

13 My child, eat honey because it tastes good,

and honey dripping from the comb tastes sweet.

14 Be aware that what is wise is like honey for you.

If you become wise, then you will have a **good** future,

and what you hope will happen will indeed occur!

15 Do not be like wicked people and hide in wait in order to attack the places where righteous people dwell.

Do not devastate the places where righteous people rest!

16 **Do not do so** because righteous people can recover many times when disastrous things happen to them,

but disastrous things will destroy wicked people.

17 Do not be happy when something disastrous happens to your adversaries.

Indeed, do not rejoice when that happens!

18 If you do, then Yahweh will notice and disapprove,

so that he stops being angry with your enemies.

19 Do not worry about people who do what is evil.

Do not be envious of wicked people.

20 Do not do so because evil people will not have good futures,
but wicked people will merely die like an oil lamp that stops burning oil.
21 My child, reverently fear Yahweh and kings.
Avoid people who rebel against either Yahweh or the king,
22 because disastrous things will happen quickly to those people,
and no one knows how terribly both Yahweh and kings can destroy others!
23 Here are more things that wise people have said:
It is very evil to favor someone when you judge.
24 If anyone declares that a guilty person is innocent,
many people will curse him and whole people groups will hate him.
25 However, people who condemn guilty people will prosper,
and Yahweh will bless them well.
26 People who answer honestly show that they are true friends.
27 Do the work you must do outside and prepare your fields
before you build your house.
28 Do not testify against someone if you do not have a good reason to do so,
and do not try to deceive people by what you say.
29 Do not say, "I will do to him that same bad thing that he did to me;
I will pay him back for what he did to me!"
30 I walked by the land of a lazy person
and past the vineyard of someone who does not think wisely.
31 And I saw that thistles and weeds were everywhere in that field and vineyard.
Even the stone wall surrounding them had fallen down.
32 When I saw that, I considered carefully what I was seeing. When I observed that,
I learned this:
33 If you say to yourself, "Let me sleep just a little more!
Let me lay my hands across my chest in order to rest comfortably for a little
while longer!"
34 Then the result of being so lazy will be that you will become poor and needy
just as surely as if a thief has robbed you.

25 1 Here are more wise sayings said by Solomon that the scribes who served Hezekiah,
the king of Judah, copied from a scroll that Solomon had written:

2 God shows how glorious he is when he makes something that is difficult for
people to understand.
But kings show how glorious they are when they explain something that is
difficult for people to understand.
3 As people cannot fully understand how high the sky is or how deep the earth is,
so they cannot fully understand what kings think.
4 People who make things from metal must remove impurities from silver
before they can make that silver into something useful.
5 In the same way, people must remove wicked advisers from the presence of kings
so that they can rule securely by being righteous.
6 Do not promote yourself in front of kings,
and do not pretend to be great.
7 Do not do so because it is better if someone invites you to sit in a place that is
closer to the king,
than for someone to embarrass you in front of a royal official whom you have
seen by telling you to sit farther away from the king.
8 Do not plead your case too quickly against someone you know.
If you do, then you will not know what to do when that person wins the case
and embarrasses you!
9 If you do indeed plead your case against someone you know,
settle it between yourselves and do not tell others any secret about that person.
10 If you do tell a secret, then the people who hear you may shame you for it,
and people will speak badly about you from then on.
11 When someone says something that is very appropriate to a situation,
it is as delightful as seeing golden apples in a setting of silver.
12 When a wise person rebukes someone who is willing to listen,
it is as valuable as a gold ring or jewelry made from the best gold.

13 Reliable messengers are **as refreshing** to those who send them as cold snow
would be **refreshing** during the **summer** harvest time;
they refresh the people whom they serve.

14 People who brag about giving something but then do not give it
are as disappointing as clouds and wind that do not bring rain.

15 People can persuade leaders by being patient,
and by speaking gently people can convince those who oppose them **to agree with them**.

16 If you discover some wild honey, do not eat too much of it.
If you do, then you will become sick from it and vomit.

17 **In the same way,** do not visit too often the houses of your friends.
If you do, then they may feel that they have had too much of you and **even** hate you.

18 People who lie when they testify against other people
are **deadly, as if they had attacked them with** a club, a sword, or a piercing arrow.

19 Trusting treacherous people during distressful times
is **like trying to eat with** a rotten tooth or **trying to walk with** a crippled foot.

20 Singing songs to someone who is sad
is **as unhelpful as** taking a coat off of someone in cold weather
or pouring vinegar on soda.

21 Feed your enemies if they are hungry;
give them something to drink if they are thirsty.

22 **Do so** because by doing so you **will shame them, as if you** were pouring burning coals on top of them,
and Yahweh will reward you **for doing so**.

23 When wind blows from the north, that produces rain.
Similarly, when people tell the secrets **of others**, **that produces** angry people.

24 It is better to live **alone** in a corner of a housetop
than to live inside a house with a wife who always argues **with you**.

25 When people hear something good from a faraway place,

it is as refreshing as drinking cold water when one is thirsty.

26 When righteous people yield to wicked people,

it is as bad as a spring that people have made murky by walking in it or as bad as a polluted fountain.

27 As it is not good to eat too much honey;

so it is not honorable to try to make people honor you.

28 People who cannot control themselves

are as defenseless as a city that an army has broken into and knocked down its walls.

26

1 Honoring foolish people is just as inappropriate

as snow falling in hot summer and rain falling during the time to harvest crops.

2 Just as a bird will fly by and not land on you,

so a curse will not harm you if you are innocent.

3 As people must whip horses and bridle donkeys in order to guide them,

so people must physically punish foolish people in order to guide them.

4 Do not reply to foolish people according to their foolish way of thinking.

If you do, then you also will be foolish.

5 Reply to foolish people according to their foolish way of thinking.

If you do not, then they may think that they are wise.

6 Anyone who asks a foolish person to take a message to someone

is doing something as foolish as cutting off his own feet or drinking poison.

7 As the legs of people who cannot walk are useless,

so are the sayings that foolish people say.

8 Honoring foolish people is just as useless

as a harmless weapon.

9 A drunken person picks up a thorn and it will hurt someone,

in the same way a foolish person says a proverb that can only be harmful.

10 People who employ foolish people or random strangers are as dangerous

as someone who randomly shoots arrows at people.

11 Foolish people who do the same foolish thing over and over again
are like dogs that eat what they have vomited up.
12 Consider this: Foolish people are more likely to learn
than people who **wrongly** think that they are **already** wise.
13 Lazy people claim that there is a lion in the path
or in the midst of the streets **so that they can stay inside their houses and do nothing**.
14 As doors swing on their hinges **and do not go anywhere**,
so lazy people turn back and forth in their beds.
15 Lazy people put their hands in a dish **of food**,
but they are so lazy that they will not lift the food to their mouths.
16 A **typical** lazy person **wrongly** thinks that he is wiser
than several people who answer intelligently.
17 People who make themselves angry because of an argument that does not concern them
are **as foolish as** people who grab the ears of a dog that is passing by.
18-19 People who trick others
and then say that they were just joking are **as dangerous**
as a crazy person who shoots deadly flaming arrows **at people**.
20 Fires stop burning when they have nothing **to burn**.
In the same way, people stop arguing when no one is gossiping.
21 **As** charcoal keeps coals burning and wood keeps fires burning,
so people who always argue keep other people arguing.
22 People are eager to listen to what people who gossip say,
and what they say deeply affects those who hear it.
23 People who fervently say **that they are your friend** while thinking about doing evil things **to you**
are as deceptive as a **cheap** clay pot that someone has made to look like silver.
24 People who hate you will use what they say to hide what they feel,
but they are **really** thinking about how to betray you.
25 Do not believe those people when they speak kindly to you,

because they are thinking many detestable things.

26 Although those people deceive others by pretending that they do not hate you,
When people gather together, they will discover how wicked those people are.

27 People who dig pits to trap others will fall into those pits instead;
and people who try to crush others with stones will become crushed by those stones instead.

28 Liars hate the people whom they hurt,
and flatterers cause disastrous things to happen.

27

1 Do not brag about **what you will do** tomorrow,
because you do not know what will happen then.

2 Do not praise yourself; let someone else praise you.
Indeed, let other people praise you, not yourself.

3 Stones and sand are heavy,
but fools are so annoying that they are harder to bear than either of those.

4 Angry people are cruel and furious people are destructive,
but no one can withstand jealous people!

5 It is better to correct people openly, than to love them without showing them that you love them.

6 Friends will be faithful to you by criticizing you **when necessary**,
but enemies will deceive you by acting affectionately toward you.

7 When people have full stomachs, they do not want to eat **even** honey.
But when people are hungry, **even** bitter things taste sweet to them.

8 People who stray from their homes
are like birds that stray from their nests.

9 Fragrant oil and perfume make people feel happy,
but having a friend who advises you sincerely is even better.

10 Do not ignore your friends or your father's friends.
Do not **think that you must** go to the house of a relative when something disastrous happens to you.

Rather, it is better to go to a nearby neighbor than to relatives who live far away.

11 My child, make me happy by becoming wise.
Then I will be able to reply to anyone who argues against me.

12 Sensible people observe something dangerous happening and avoid it,
but naive people ignorantly do not avoid it and suffer for doing so.

13 Take the coats of people who promise to pay a loan for someone whom they do not know.
Indeed, hold onto the coats of people who do so for a foreigner.

14 If you rise early in the morning and loudly call out a blessing to your neighbor while he is still sleeping, he will consider it to be a curse, not a blessing.

15 A wife who always argues with you is as annoying as
constantly dripping water on a rainy day.

16 It is as difficult to stop her from arguing as stopping the wind,
or catching oil in one hand.

17 We can use one iron tool to sharpen another iron tool; similarly, when one person shares what he is thinking, it can help another person to think more clearly.

18 Just as people who take care of fruit trees will also eat the fruit from those trees,
so too will masters honor their servants who guard them.

19 When people look in water, the water reflects their faces.
In the same way, what people think reveals what kinds of people they are.

20 Just as the place where dead people go never becomes full;
so people never stop wanting things.

21 People use crucibles and furnaces to test and refine silver and gold.
In the same way, people can know what kind of person someone is by how he reacts when people praise him.

22 If you were to crush a fool the way that you would crush grain into powder,
you would still not be able to find any part of him that is not foolish.

23 Be fully aware of how your sheep are doing.
Indeed, consider carefully how your animals fare.

24 Do so because riches will not last forever.

Even a king's family will not rule forever!

25 Harvest the grass and then you will see new grass.
Collect and store the plants that grow on the hillside.

26 If you do these things, then you will have lambs with wool that you can clothe yourself with. You will also have male goats that you can sell for enough money to buy a field.

27 You will even have female goats that produce enough milk for yourself, your family,
and your servant girls to drink.

28

1 Wicked people run away even though no one is chasing them,
but righteous people are as brave as lions.

2 When the people in a country sin, they will continually have new leaders;
but when they have a truly knowledgeable ruler, then they will have a stable government that will last.

3 A poor person who oppresses other poor people
is as destructive as rain that washes away the crops, leaving nothing to eat.

4 People who reject Yahweh's laws say good things about wicked people;
but people who obey those laws oppose such wicked people.

5 Evil people cannot comprehend what is just,
but people who desire to please Yahweh comprehend everything about it.

6 It is better to be poor and honest
than to be dishonest and rich.

7 Young people who obey Yahweh's laws are wise,
but young people who carouse with gluttons disgrace their fathers.

8 Money that people gain by charging an unreasonably large amount of interest from those to whom they loan money
will eventually belong to someone who is kind to poor people.

9 Yahweh detests hearing prayers from people
who refuse to obey his laws.

10 People who guide upright people to act evilly
will destroy themselves by what they do,

but people whom Yahweh does not blame for acting wickedly will receive what is good.

11 Rich people tend to think that they are wise,
but perceptive poor people can tell whether or not this is true.

12 People celebrate when righteous people become powerful,
but people hide when wicked people become powerful.

13 People who try to hide the sinful things that they do will never be successful,
but Yahweh will be merciful to people who confess the sinful things that they have done and stop doing them.

14 People who constantly examine how they are thinking and behaving are happy,
but bad things will happen to people who become uncaring about those things.

15 Wicked people who rule over poor people are as dangerous as
a roaring lion or attacking bear.

16 Leaders who are not sensible severely oppress other people,
but people who despise gaining wealth unjustly will live for a long time.

17 People who murder others will keep running away from those who would punish them until they die.
Do not help them!

18 Yahweh will rescue people who continually do what is right,
but people who behave dishonestly will ruin themselves in the end.

19 People who work hard will have enough food to eat,
but people who waste time doing worthless things will only be poor.

20 Yahweh abundantly blesses faithful people,
but he will certainly punish people who are eager to be wealthy.

21 Although it is very evil to unfairly favor one person over another,
some people will sin by doing so to get even a small bribe.

22 People who are eager to become rich are greedy.
They do not realize that they will become poor.

23 Afterward, people appreciate someone who has corrected them
more than they appreciate someone who has spoken flatteringly to them.

24 People who rob their parents and say that doing so is not wrong
are as bad as thieves.
25 Greedy people cause people to argue with each other,
but Yahweh will prosper people who trust him.
26 People who trust in themselves are foolish,
but people who act wisely are the ones who will escape **what is dangerous**.
27 People who give poor people **what they need** will have all that they need,
but there are many who will curse people who ignore poor people.
28 People hide when wicked people become powerful,
but when those wicked people die, there will be more and more righteous people.

29 **1** Some people remain stubborn even though other people often correct them;
but someday something will destroy them quickly, and they will not be able to recover.
2 People are joyful when righteous people become influential,
but people are miserable when wicked people rule **over them**.
3 People who cherish what is wise make their fathers happy,
but people who have sex with prostitutes waste all their money.
4 Kings make the people in their land succeed by acting justly,
but leaders who take money dishonestly ruin the people in their land.
5 People who flatter others
are really just preparing to exploit them in some way
6 Evil people endanger themselves by acting sinfully,
but righteous people sing joyfully and are happy.
7 Righteous people know that they should treat poor people justly,
but wicked people do not **even** understand that they should know **this**.
8 People who mock others agitate people throughout a city,
but wise people enable others to remain calm.
9 If wise people dispute with foolish people,
the foolish people will become angry and sneer and not resolve anything.

10 Murderers despise people who always try to do what is right,
but righteous people try to protect them.
11 Foolish people uncontrollably express everything that they feel,
but wise people control how they express what they feel.
12 Leaders who believe the false things that people tell them
have only wicked servants.
13 Poor people and the people who oppress **them** have **at least** one thing in common:
Yahweh is the one who causes both of them to live.
14 Kings who judge poor people according to what is true
will always rule securely.
15 If parents punish and correct their children, doing so can make those children wise;
but if parents let their children do whatever they want to do, then their children will disgrace them.
16 People sin more when wicked people rule over them,
but **someday** Yahweh will destroy those wicked people, and righteous people will see it happen.
17 If you discipline your children, then you will no longer feel worried **about their behavior**
and they will make you very happy.
18 When the people **of a nation** do not have messages from Yahweh **through his prophets**, then they do not control themselves,
but people who obey **Yahweh's** laws are happy.
19 You cannot correct servants by **only** speaking to them
because they will not do what you say even though they understand **what you say**.
20 Consider this: Foolish people are more likely to do well in life
than people who speak thoughtlessly.
21 If you give your servants everything they want when they are young,
then they will eventually be arrogant.
22 People who easily become angry cause people to argue.

Indeed, angry people cause many people to sin.

23 People will humiliate proud people for being proud,
but people will honor those who are humble.

24 People who take a share of a thief's spoils greatly endanger themselves;
They hear that Yahweh will curse them **for not testifying to what they know**,
but they do not say anything **about the crime**.

25 Being anxious is **as dangerous as walking into** a trap,
but Yahweh will protect people who trust in him.

26 Many **people** want leaders to help them,
but Yahweh is the **only** one who **surely** does for them what is just.

27 Righteous people detest unjust people,
and wicked people detest people who do the right thing.

30 **1** **These are** the sayings of Agur son of Jakeh, which Yahweh told him to say;

these are what Agur declared to both Ithiel and Ucal:

2 I am certainly less intelligent than other people.
Indeed, I do not understand as much as everyone else understands!

3 I have not learned how to become wise,
nor do I know **much** about **Yahweh,** the Holy One.

4 **But I will say this:** Surely nobody has ever gone to heaven and returned to earth!
Surely nobody has ever controlled the wind!
Surely nobody has ever gathered the water for rain in the clouds!
Surely nobody has ever formed the boundaries of the earth!
You do not know the name of any such person, or the name of his son.
Therefore, you **also** do not know **much**!

5 Everything that God says is true;
he is **like** a shield that protects people who trust him to protect them.

6 Never claim that God has said something other than what he has **actually** said.
If you do that, then he will correct you and he will prove that you lied **about what he said**.

7 God, I ask you to do two things;
please do them for me before I die:
8 Please prevent me from being dishonest or speaking what is not true.
Please do not let me become too poor or too rich,
but just provide the proper amount of food for me.
9 Because if I become rich, I might say that I do not know you and that I do not need you;
and if I become poor,
I might dishonor you by stealing things.
10 Never say bad things about servants to the people whom they serve.
If you do, then they will curse you, and people will hold you responsible for what you said.
11 Some people disrespect their parents.
12 Some people think that they are sinless,
but they have committed disgusting sins, like people who have covered themselves with excrement.
13 Some people are very proud!
14 They think that they are better than other people. Some people are very cruel toward others;
they harshly oppress and destroy poor people
as fierce animals attack and eat other animals.
15 Greedy people are like the offspring of leeches
because they always want other people to give them more.
There are three, even four things that always want more:
16 the place where dead people are,
childless women,
soil that never receives enough water,
and fire that keeps consuming more.
17 People who ridicule their fathers,
and refuse to obey their mothers
deserve to die

and have wild animals eat their dead bodies.

18 There are three, even four things, that are too amazing for me to comprehend:

19 how a bird flies in the air,
how a snake slithers over a rock,
how a ship sails in the middle of the ocean,
and how a young man loves a young woman.

20 Acting adulterously is as easy for adulterous women as
eating and wiping their mouths.
Afterward, they claim that they have not sinned at all.

21 There are three, even four, things that the people in the world cannot tolerate:

22 what slaves do who become rulers,
what worthless people do when they have plenty of food to eat,

23 what women whom people hate do when they marry someone,
and what servant girls do who replace the wives of their masters.

24 There are four creatures in the world that are small
but extremely wise:

25 Although ants are not strong,
they store up their food during the summer so that they have it to eat during the winter.

26 Although hyraxes are also not strong,
they are able to make their homes high up in the rocks on cliffs.

27 Although locusts do not have a king,
they move in orderly groups like soldiers in an army.

28 Although anyone can easily catch lizards in his hands,
they can freely enter into kings' palaces.

29 There are three, even four, things that look very impressive when they walk:

30 lions, which are the most powerful animals
and never flee from anything,

31 strutting male birds, male goats,
and kings whom people are afraid to rebel against.

32 If you have acted foolishly by bragging about yourself,

or if you were plotting to do what is evil,
then stop doing so immediately!
33 Stop doing so because just as churning milk produces butter,
and squeezing a nose produces blood,
making people angry causes them to fight.

31 1 These are the sayings of King Lemuel; Yahweh had spoken these sayings that his mother had taught him:

2 My son, whom I gave birth to
and whom I vowed to dedicate to Yahweh, listen to me!
3 Do not exhaust yourself by having sex with women;
they can destroy kings.
4 Lemuel, kings and dignitaries should not constantly drink wine,
or greatly desire to drink what can intoxicate them.
5 They must not do this so that they do not forget the laws that they have made
and prevent all suffering people from getting what they legally deserve.
6 Let dying people drink what can intoxicate them,
and let miserable people drink wine.
7 They can drink what can intoxicate them to forget that they are poor
and to completely forget what troubles them.
8 Defend those who cannot speak for themselves;
defend all those whom others are threatening to kill so that they get what they legally deserve.
9 Defend, judge rightly,
and plead for suffering and poor people to get what they legally deserve.
10 Virtuous and capable women are difficult to find!
This kind of woman is more valuable than precious jewels.
11 Her husband completely trusts her,
and he will always gain many things because of her.
12 Such a woman benefits her husband

for as long as she lives.

13 She gets materials to make clothing for both warm and cool weather,
and she enjoys making that clothing.

14 She is like merchant ships
because she brings food to her home from distant places.

15 She gets up before dawn in order to prepare food for her family
and to prepare some **food** for her female servants.

16 She carefully evaluates a field and then buys it.
Then she uses some of what she earned by working to plant a vineyard **in it**.

17 She keeps her body strong,
and she makes her arms strong **by working hard**.

18 She knows that what she does is very profitable.
She works late into the night.

19 She makes thread **for clothing** with her own hands.

20 She generously helps people who are poor and suffering.

21 She is not worried that her family will be cold during cold weather
because her whole family has the best clothing.

22 She makes her own blankets to cover beds.
She wears clothing made from expensive cloth.

23 People respect such a woman's husband at the **city** gates,
when he sits **there** with the **other** leaders of the city.

24 This woman makes clothing and sells it.
She also sells belts to merchants.

25 People notice how strong and dignified she is,
and she is cheerful about what will happen in the future.

26 She speaks wisely,
and when she speaks, she teaches **others** to be faithful and kind.

27 She carefully watches what happens in her household,
and she is never lazy.

28 This woman's children stand respectfully and declare that she lives well.
Her husband says good things about her, as well.

29 He says to her, “Many women have acted virtuously and capably,
but you indeed have done better than them all!”

30 Charming women who are not good can deceive people into thinking that they are good,
and beautiful women will be beautiful for only a short time.
However, people will always praise those women who reverently fear Yahweh.

31 Give to such women what they have earned,
and praise them publicly for what they have done.

Song of Songs

1 **1** This is King Solomon's most beautiful song.

The woman thinks about the man she loves

2 I wish he would kiss me on my lips,

The woman speaks internally to the absent man

because how you love me is more delightful than wine.

3 The fragrance of the perfume on your skin is very pleasing.
More and more people are honoring you,
just as the fragrance of the perfume that you have put on your skin is spreading farther and farther.
That is why the other young women are attracted to you.

4 Take me quickly;
take me to your home.

The woman speaking to herself

He is like a king to me;
I desire him to bring me into his bedroom.

The women of Jerusalem speaking about the man

We are very happy about you;
we say that how you love is better than wine.

The woman speaking to the man about the young women of Jerusalem

It is not surprising that the young women adore you.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

5 You young women of Jerusalem,
I am brown but beautiful;
my dark skin is like the tents in Kedar,
and I am beautiful like the curtains in Solomon's palace.
6 But do not stare at me because the sun has made my skin dark;
my brothers were angry with me,
so they forced me to work outside in the sunshine in the vineyards,
so I was not able to take good care of my skin.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

7 You whom I love, where will you take your flock of sheep today?
Where will you allow them to rest at noontime?
I want to know because it is not right for me to wander around like a prostitute,
looking for you among the flocks that belong to your friends.

The man answering the woman he loves

8 You who are the most beautiful of all the women,
if you search for me and do not know where I will take my sheep,
follow the tracks of the sheep.
Then allow your young goats to eat grass near the shepherds' tents.
9 You excite me, my dear one,
like a mare walking among Pharoah's stallions.
10 Your cheeks are lovely with jewelry,
and your neck is lovely with strings of beads around it.
11 We will make for you some gold earrings
that are inlaid with silver.

The woman speaking to herself

12 During the time that he who is like a king to me reclined on his couch,
the fragrance of my perfume spread around the room.

13 During the night I desire to cradle the man I love between my breasts; to me, he
is like the bag of sweet-smelling perfume which I keep there.
14 The man whom I love is like a bunch of the fragrant flowers that are in the
grape farms of the city of En Gedi.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

15 My dear one, you are beautiful;
you are very beautiful!
Your eyes are as gentle and beautiful as doves.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

16 You whom I love, you are very good-looking,
you are delightful!
The green grass will be like a bed where we lie down.
17 Branches of cedar trees will shade us;
branches of pine trees will be like a roof over our heads.

2 1 I am like an insignificant flower on the plains,
like an insignificant lily growing in the valleys.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

2 Among all the other young women,
you, my dear one, are like a lily growing among thorns!

The woman speaking to herself

3 Compared to other men, you, the one whom I love, are like an apple tree that
produces delicious fruit and grows in the forest among common trees.
You are like a tree whose shade protects me from the sun,
and your being close to me is delightful, like eating sweet fruit.
4 I want you to lead me to the place where we can make love,
and it is evident that you love me very much.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

5 Strengthen and refresh me with fruit,
because the way you love me makes me feel lovesick.

The woman speaking to herself

6 The man whom I love has placed his left arm under my head,
and he holds me close with his right arm.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

7 You young women of Jerusalem,
I want you to solemnly promise me, while the female gazelles and female deer are listening,
that you will not cause people to love romantically
until it is the right time.

The woman speaking to herself

8 Listen! Look! The man whom I love is coming.
It is as though he is leaping over the mountains
and skipping over the hills,
9 like a gazelle or a young male deer.
Look! There he is! He is standing outside the wall of our house,
peering in through the window,
and looking intently through the wooden strips inside the window frame.
10 The man whom I love spoke to me and said,
“My dear one, get up;
my beautiful one, come with me!
11 Look, the cold season has ended;
the rain has stopped.
12 The flowers are blooming throughout the country.
It is now time to sing;
we hear the doves cooing throughout our land.
13 There are new figs on the fig trees,

and there are blossoms on the grapevines,
and their fragrance fills the air.
My dear one, get up;
my beautiful one, come with me!
14 You are like a dove that is hiding far from me in an opening in the rocky cliff.
Allow me to see your form,
and allow me to hear your voice,
because your voice sounds sweet,
and your form is comely."

The woman speaking to the man she loves

15 There are harmful things that are like little foxes that ruin vineyards;
do not allow these things to ruin our growing relationship.
16 You whom I love, you are mine, and I am yours.
You have pleasure when you kiss my lips,
as a gazelle does when eating among the lilies.
17 You whom I love, come and be like a gazelle or a young male deer on the mountains in Bether,
until the evening breeze blows and the sun sets.

The woman speaking to herself

3

1 At night while I lay on my bed,
I searched for the man whom I love.
I searched for him,
but could not find him.
2 So I said to myself,
"I will get up now and walk around the city,
through the streets and plazas,
to search for the man whom I love."
So I got up and went out to search for him,
but I could not find him.

3 The city watchmen saw me
while they were walking around the city.
I asked them,
"Have you seen the man whom I love?"
4 As soon as I walked past them,
I found the man whom I love.
I clung to him and would not release my hold on him
until I brought him to my mother's house,
to the bedroom of my mother who had conceived me.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

5 You young women of Jerusalem,
I want you to solemnly promise me, while the female gazelles and female deer are listening,
that you will not cause people to love romantically
until it is the right time.

The woman speaking to herself

6 Look! See what is coming up from the dry and uninhabited area.
Look at what is stirring up dust like clouds of smoke,
and like billows of smoke from burning myrrh and incense,
which are from the fragrant powders imported by traveling traders!
7 Look! Solomon has sent his portable royal chair,
and it is surrounded by 60 bodyguards
chosen from the greatest soldiers in Israel.
8 They all have swords,
and they all know how to use them.
Each one has his sword strapped to his side
and is prepared to defend against dangers that might occur during the night.
9 King Solomon commanded his servants to make that royal portable chair for him;

it was made with wood from Lebanon.

10 The canopy that covered it was held up by posts made with silver,
and the base of the palanquin was made with gold.
The seat was covered with purple cloth,
and the inside of the palanquin was lovingly decorated by the women of Jerusalem.

11 You young women of Jerusalem,
come and look at King Solomon
wearing the headdress that his mother put on his head
on the day when he was married,
on the day when he was very happy.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

4 **1** My dear one, you are beautiful,
you are very beautiful!
Beneath your veil, your eyes are as gentle and as beautiful as doves.
Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats
moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.

2 Your teeth are very white,
white like a flock of sheep whose wool people have just cut off
and which have just come up from washing in a stream.
You have all of your teeth on both sides of your mouth;
none of them is missing.

3 Your lips are the color of bright red thread,
and your mouth is beautiful.
Beneath your veil,
your cheeks are round and rosy like the halves of a pomegranate.

4 Your long neck is beautiful like the tower of King David
that was built using layers of stone.

The beauty of your jeweled neck is like a thousand shields hanging on the walls of a tower;
like the beauty of a thousand warrior's shields hanging from a tower.
5 Your two breasts are as beautiful as two young twin gazelles
that eat grass among lilies.
6 Until the evening breeze blows
and the sun sets,
I will go to your breasts
because they are like two hills that smell like pleasant spices.
7 My dear one, you are completely beautiful;
your body is perfectly formed and has no blemish!
8 Come back to me, my bride. It is as though you are in Lebanon
far away, where I cannot reach you.
Come back to me.
It is as though you are inaccessible on the top of Mount Hermon
or the nearby peaks, where I cannot go to you.
Come from the mountains, where the lions have their dens
and where the leopards live.
9 You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride,
by only once quickly looking at me with your eyes, and by one strand of jewels in your necklace,
you have obtained my full affection.
10 You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride,
your love for me is delightful!
It is more delightful than wine!
The fragrance of your perfume
is more pleasing than any spice!
11 When you kiss me, my bride, it is as delightful as eating honey.
Your kisses are as sweet as milk mixed with honey.
The aroma of your clothes
is like the aroma of cedar trees in Lebanon.

12 You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride, you are like a garden that the owner keeps locked
so that other men cannot enter it;
you are like a spring or a fountain that is covered
so that others may not drink from it.
13 You are like an orchard of pomegranate trees
full of delicious fruit
and plenty of plants that produce henna and nard spices,
14 and saffron and calamus and cinnamon
and many other kinds of incense,
myrrh and aloes,
and many other fine spices.
15 You are like a spring in a garden,
like a well of fresh-flowing water,
and like streams that flow down from the mountains of Lebanon.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

16 I want the north wind and the south wind to come
and blow on me,
so that the fragrance of my body will spread through the air and attract the man I love.
You whom I love, I am like your garden.
I want you to come and enjoy my body,
like someone comes into a garden and enjoys eating the delicious fruit that grows there.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

5 **1** You who are as dear to me as a sister, my bride,
I am ready to go away with you now and enjoy making love with you.
It will be delightful, delightful like when I gather my myrrh with my other spices,

as wonderful as eating my honey and honeycomb,
and as enjoyable as drinking my wine with milk.

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the newly married couple

Friends, enjoy making love;
fully enjoy all that you do with each other.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

2 I was asleep, and I had a dream.
In it I heard the man I love knocking at the door.
He said, “You who are as dear to me as a sister, my dear one, you who are like a dove, my flawless one.
Open the door for me
because my hair is wet from the dew,
from the mist that has fallen during the night.”
3 But I had already taken my robe off;
I did not want to put it on again to open the door.
I had already washed my feet;
so I did not want them to get dirty again by answering the door.
4 The man I love put his hand through the opening in the door,
and I was thrilled in my inner being that he was there.
5 I got up to open the door for the man I love,
but first I put much myrrh on my hands.
The liquid myrrh was dripping from my fingers
while I unlatched the bolt.
6 I opened the door for the man I love,
but he had left.
He had turned away and was gone!
I greatly despaired because he was not there.
I searched for him, but I could not find him.
I called out for him, but he did not answer.

7 The city watchmen saw me while they were walking around the city.
They struck me and bruised me
because they thought I was a prostitute;
those watchmen who were guarding the city walls took my robe that was on me.

8 You young women of Jerusalem,
if you see the man I love, what will you tell him?
I want you to solemnly promise me that if you see him,
you will tell him that the way he loves me makes me feel lovesick.

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the woman

9 You who are the most beautiful of all the women,
why do you think that the man you love is better than other men?
In what way is he better than other men
that would cause you to want us to solemnly promise that we will tell him that?

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

10 It is because the man I love is handsome and healthy,
outstanding among an uncountable number of other men.

11 His face is beautiful and gleams like gold; he is as precious as purest gold.
His hair is wavy
and as black as a raven.

12 His eyes are as gentle and beautiful as doves
which are beside streams.
His eyes are as white as white doves
which are sitting beside pools of water.

13 His cheeks are like a garden where spices grow
and like towers where spices are kept.
His lips are like lilies
that have myrrh dripping from them.

14 His arms are like round gold rods,
that are decorated with precious stones.
His abdomen is like ivory
that is decorated with sapphires.
15 His legs are like alabaster columns
that are set in bases made of pure gold.
He is majestic, like the mountains of Lebanon.
He is tall and strong and outstanding like the cedar trees that grow there.
16 His kisses are very sweet;
he is completely attractive.
You young women of Jerusalem,
this is what the man I love, who is my friend, is like, and this is why he is better than all other men.

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the woman

6 **1** You who are the most beautiful of the women,
where has the man you love gone?
Tell us which direction he went,
and we will go with you to search for him.

The woman speaking to herself

2 The man who I love has come to me.
I am like his garden where pleasant spices grow.
He has come to enjoy my body as a gazelle enjoys grazing in a garden and as a
3 person enjoys picking lilies. I belong to the man I love, and he belongs to me.
He feels pleasure when he is near me,
as a gazelle does when eating among lilies.

The man speaking My dear one, you are beautiful.

4 You are as beautiful as the city of Tirzah and as lovely as the city of Jerusalem.

You are as exciting and majestic to look at as an army with banners.

5 Stop looking at me like that,
because your eyes excite me very much.
Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats
moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.

6 Your teeth are very white,
white like a flock of sheep
that has just come up from being washed in a stream.
You have all of your teeth on both sides of your mouth;
none of them is missing.

7 Beneath your veil,
your cheeks are round and rosy like the halves of a pomegranate.

8 Even if a king had 60 queens and 80 concubines
and more young women in his court than anyone can count,

9 none of them would be as special as she is. She is like a dove; she is flawless.
Her mother considers her to be very special;
she is her mother's favorite child.
When the young women of the king's court see her, they say that she is fortunate,
and the queens and concubines praise her.

10 Look at this woman who appears like the dawn,
who is as beautiful to look at as the moon,
who is radiant like the sun,
who is as exciting and majestic to look at as an army with banners!

11 I went down to the walnut tree orchard
to look at the new plants that were growing in the valley.
I wanted to see if the grapevines had budded
and if the pomegranate trees were blooming.

12 All of a sudden
I imagined that I was among the chariots of my noble people.

The women of Jerusalem speaking

13 Come back to us, beautiful woman from Shulam,
come back to us, in order that we may see you!

The man speaking

Why do you want to look at the beautiful woman from Shulam,
as if she were a dancer who dances to entertain armies?

7 **1** You who are the daughter of a prince,
have very lovely feet in your sandals!
Your curved hips are like jewels
that have been made by a man who shapes jewels very well.
2 Your navel is like a round bowl
that is always full of wine mixed with spices.
Your belly is like a pile of wheat
with lilies growing around it.
3 Your breasts are as delicate as two young twin gazelles.
4 Your neck is long and beautiful, like a tower made of ivory.
Your eyes sparkle like the pools of water in the city of Heshbon,
near the Bath Rabbim gate.
Your nose is beautiful like the tower in Lebanon
that faces Damascus.
5 Your head is majestic like Mount Carmel.
Your long hair is shiny and black;
it is as though I, your king, am captured by your tresses.
6 You are very beautiful and very lovely!
Loving you is very delightful!
7 You are tall like a palm tree,
and your breasts are full and round like date clusters that hang from palm trees.
8 I said to myself, “I will climb that palm tree
and take hold of those clusters of dates.”

I want your breasts to be like sweet bunches of grapes that I can enjoy;

9 I want your breath to be like the sweet fragrance of apples. I want your kisses
to be like very good wine.

The woman speaking to the man she loves

When I kiss you, the man whom I love,

I want my kisses to be as if you are freely drinking wine,

10 and as if wine is flowing over our lips as we sleep together. I belong to the
man I love,

and he desires me.

11 You whom I love, come with me, and let us go to the countryside,

and sleep in one of the villages.

12 And let us go early to the vineyards

to see if the grapevines have budded

and if there are blossoms on them that have opened,

and to see if the pomegranate trees are blooming,

and there I will have sexual relations with you.

13 The mandrake plants are producing a fragrant scent,

and the pleasures we will experience as we express our love for each other
will be like choice fruits that have been stored,

new ones and old ones.

You whom I love, I have reserved my love for you as if I were storing choice
fruit.

8 **1** I wish that you were like my brother,

my own brother, who nursed from my mother's breasts when he was a baby.

Because then, whenever I met you outside the house, I could kiss you,

and no one would criticize me.

2 I would like to bring you to my mother's house,

to where my mother, who taught me so many things, lives.

I would like to take you to my mother's house so I could have sexual relations
with you there.

Having sexual relations with you would be as if I were giving you spiced wine to drink, as if I were giving you sweet pomegranate wine.

3 The man I love has placed his left arm under my head
and he holds me close with his right arm.

The woman speaking to the women of Jerusalem

4 You young women of Jerusalem,
I want you to solemnly promise me,
that you will not cause people to love romantically
until it is the right time.

The women of Jerusalem speaking

5 Look at this woman who is coming up from the wilderness,
the woman who is leaning on the man she loves!

The young woman speaking to the man she loves

I woke you up when you were under the apple tree
at the place where your mother gave birth to you,
the place where you were born.

6 Keep me close to you,
like a seal that rests against your chest as it hangs down from its cord,
or like a seal worn on your bracelet.
The strength with which I love you is as powerful as the strength of death;
it is as strong as the grave.
It is as though our love for each other bursts into flames,
and as though our love is the lightning that Yahweh creates.

7 We love each other so deeply,
that how we love each other can be compared to a strong fire that no river or flood can put out.
If a man tried to cause a woman to love him by saying he would give her everything that he owns,

she would refuse.

The young woman's brothers speaking among themselves

8 We have a young sister,
and her breasts are not large yet.
What should we do for her at the time that we promise some young man that he can marry her?

9 We will protect her virginity,
as if we were soldiers building a battlement of silver to protect a wall.
We will protect her virginity,
like we would protect a door from intruders by covering it with boards made of cedar wood.

The woman speaking

10 Like a wall that allows no one to enter, I have remained a virgin and let no man come into me;
but now my breasts are large like towers.
So I am delightful to my beloved.

11 King Solomon had a vineyard at a place called Baal Hamon,
and he rented it to people for them to farm it.
He required each one to pay him one thousand pieces of silver each year for the grapes that they harvested.

12 But my body is like my own vineyard, which is mine to give to the man whom I choose.
Solomon can keep the one thousand pieces of silver that he receives from renting his vineyard,
and the farmers who take care of it for him can keep the two hundred pieces of silver he pays them.

The man speaking to the woman he loves

13 You, the woman I love, who are staying in the gardens,
my friends are eagerly listening so that they can hear you speak;

speak to me!

The young woman speaking to the man she loves

14 You whom I love, come to me quickly!
Run to me like a gazelle or a young male deer
runs across mountains where spices grow.

Lamentations

1 ALEPH

1 Jerusalem, the city that was once so full of people,
is now empty and deserted.
It was once the greatest city among all the nations,
but now it is like a widow—alone and without protection.
It was once honored among the provinces like a princess,
but now her people are forced to do slave labor.

BETH

2 Jerusalem's inhabitants weep and cry bitterly all through the night;
tears run down their cheeks.
None of the nations that loved them have come to comfort them.
All their allies have turned against them;
they have all become their enemies.

GIMEL

3 Enemies drove the people of Judah out to other countries,
and made them suffer greatly as slaves.
They live among foreign nations,
where they find no peace or rest.
Their enemies caught up with them;
they were trapped and could not escape.

DALETH

4 No one comes to Zion anymore for the sacred festivals,
so the roads to the city are silent and empty.
The city gates stand deserted;
the priests groan in sorrow.
The young women of the city are grieving,
and the whole city is filled with bitterness.

HE

5 Jerusalem's enemies have become rulers over it;
its adversaries are doing well.
Yahweh has caused it to suffer greatly,
because of all the ways its people sinned against him.
Its children have been taken captive
and marched away before the enemy.

WAW

6 All the glory and beauty that Zion once had
has left it completely.
Its leaders are like deer that are starving
because they cannot find any grass to eat.
They stumble along weakly
with the enemy chasing them.

ZAYIN

7 Now as Jerusalem suffers in exile and misery,
its people remember all the good things that they had in former times.

When the enemy conquered the people,
no one came to help them.
Some enemies watched
and laughed contemptuously as others destroyed the city.

HETH

8 Jerusalem's people sinned so greatly
that the city became something everyone treated as filthy and defiling.
All those who had honored it now despise it,
because they have seen how shamefully disgraced it has become.
Now its people moan
and humbly hide.

TETH

9 Everyone can see that the people in Jerusalem have made themselves impure by sinning,
but its people never thought about what would happen to them as a result.
The enemy devastated Jerusalem in a terrible way;
no one has come to comfort its people.
They cried out, "Yahweh, see how we are suffering!
The enemy has triumphed over us!"

YODH

10 The enemy took possession of all its precious treasures.
Its people watched as foreign nations entered the temple—
the nations that you, Yahweh, had commanded
to stay out of your holy place.

KAPH

11 All the people groan and search for food.
They have traded their precious things just to get something to eat
so that they can stay alive.
They cried out, “Yahweh, look at us!
See how people treat us contemptuously!”

LAMEDH

12 Jerusalem’s people cried out to those passing by the ruined city,
“Do you not care at all about what has happened to us?
Look around you and see—
has anyone ever suffered as much as we have suffered?
Yahweh inflicted this terrible pain on us
on the day when he was fiercely angry.

MEM

13 He sent fire down from above
that burned deep inside us.
He set a trap that caught our feet
and forced us to turn back.
He left us devastated and abandoned,
exhausted and miserable all day long.

NUN

14 God tied our sins around our necks like a heavy yoke;
they are twisted tightly together so that we cannot remove them.
They are piled onto our necks and weigh us down,

so that we have no strength left.
The Lord handed us over
to enemies we have no power to defeat.

SAMEKH

15 The Lord has despised and rejected all our warriors.
He called our enemies together at the right time
to destroy our young men.
The Lord has crushed the people of Judah
like someone treading on grapes in a winepress.

AYIN

16 These are the things we weep over, weeping without stopping;
our eyes overflow with tears.
There is no one near us to comfort us
or to restore our strength.
Our children have been left with nothing,
because the enemy has overcome us."

PE

17 Zion's people reach out their hands, pleading for help,
but no one comes to comfort them.
Yahweh ordered that all the nations surrounding Jacob would become his enemies.
Jerusalem has become something all the neighboring nations treat as defiling and avoid.

TSADHE

18 Jerusalem's people said, "Yahweh is righteous,
because we disobeyed his commands.
Listen, all you peoples of the world,
and see what great pain we are in.
Our young women and young men
have been taken away as captives.

QOPH

19 We called to our allies for help,
but they completely betrayed us.
Our priests and our elders
died in the city,
while they were desperately searching for food
just to stay alive.

RESH

20 Yahweh, look at how much we are suffering!
Our stomachs churn with anguish;
our hearts are completely devastated within us,
because we have deeply and truly rebelled against you.
In the streets, the sword kills people;
inside the city, people are dying like a plague.

SIN

21 People have heard us groaning in misery,
but no one has come to comfort us.
All our enemies have heard about the disaster that came upon us;
they are glad about it,

because you are the one who brought it.
Bring the day of punishment that you promised,
when they will suffer as we have suffered!

TAW

22 Let all the evil things they have done come to your attention,
and punish them for what they have done.
Treat them the way you treated us
for all the ways we sinned against you.
We are constantly sighing and groaning,
and we grieve greatly."

2 ALEPH

1 The Lord was very angry with the people of Jerusalem,
so he brought darkness and judgment on them.
Jerusalem used to be a beautiful and glorious city,
but he humiliated it and brought it down to nothing.
When the day came for him to punish Israel,
he did not even spare his own temple.

BETH

2 The Lord completely destroyed all the homes of Jacob's descendants
and was not merciful to them.
Because he was furious,
he tore the fortresses of the people of Judah down to the ground.
He disgraced their kingdom and its rulers.

GIMEL

3 Because he was extremely angry,
he took away all of Israel's power.
He refused to protect his people
when their enemies attacked them.
He destroyed everything among Jacob's descendants
like a raging fire that burns up everything around it.

DALETH

4 He got ready to shoot his bow at us, his own people,
as though we were his enemies.
He used his power to kill everyone we loved most
among the people of Jerusalem.
He was extremely angry with us; his anger burned like a fire.

HE

5 The Lord started treating us like an enemy;
he destroyed Israel.
He destroyed all of Jerusalem's palaces
and turned its fortresses into ruins.
He caused the people of Judah
to grieve and weep even more.

WAW

6 He wrecked his own temple as easily as someone tears down a garden hut;
he destroyed the place where people gathered to worship him.
Yahweh caused the people of Zion to stop celebrating their sacred festivals and Sabbath days.
Because he was so furiously angry,

he rejected both the king and the priest.

ZAYIN

7 The Lord turned away from his own altar;
he abandoned his own holy place.
He let the enemies have power over the walls of Jerusalem's palaces.
Those enemies shouted triumphantly inside Yahweh's temple,
as if they were celebrating one of the sacred festivals.

HETH

8 Yahweh planned to destroy the wall of Jerusalem.
He carefully measured it out for destruction
and then he did not stop himself from devouring it.
He made the outer wall and the inner wall fall into ruin;
together they crumbled.

TETH

9 Jerusalem's gates have sunk into the ground;
Yahweh smashed the bars that held them shut.
The enemy has taken the king and the officials away to foreign nations;
no one teaches them God's instruction anymore.
The prophets also no longer receive any messages from Yahweh.

YODH

10 The old men of Jerusalem sit on the ground and say nothing.
They have thrown dust on their heads
and put on rough sackcloth **to show how deeply they grieve**.

The young women of Jerusalem bow their faces all the way down to the ground.

KAPH

11 I have cried until my eyes can produce no more tears;
my stomach is churning with anguish.
I feel as if my insides are spilling out on the ground,
because so many of my people have died.
Even children and babies are fainting
in the city streets because they have nothing to eat.

LAMEDH

12 The children cry out to their mothers,
"We need food and drink!"
They collapse in the city streets like fatally wounded soldiers,
and they die slowly
in the arms of their mothers.

MEM

13 People of Jerusalem,
there is nothing I can say to help you.
Nothing that has ever happened to anyone else compares to what has happened to you people who live on mount Zion;
I do not know how to comfort you.
The disaster that struck you is as vast as the sea;
no one can restore you.

NUN

14 The prophets among you claimed to hear messages from Yahweh,
but what they said was false and worthless.
They did not rebuke you when you sinned
so that you could have changed your ways and avoided disaster.
Instead, the messages they told you were lies that caused you to do wrong things.

SAMEKH

15 Everyone who passes by on the road
claps their hands to mock you.
They hiss with contempt and shake their heads
at Jerusalem:
"Can this really be the city that people used to say was
the perfectly beautiful city, the city that made all the earth rejoice?"

AYIN

16 All your enemies open their mouths wide against you to mock you.
They hiss with contempt and grind their teeth with hatred;
they say, "We have devoured her!
This is the very day we waited for;
we have lived to see it!"

PE

17 Yahweh has done what he planned to do;
he has carried out the threat
that he announced long ago.
He has torn the city down and shown no mercy;
he has let your enemies celebrate over you,
and he has made those who attack you more powerful than ever.

TSADHE

18 The people of Jerusalem cried out to the Lord from deep within themselves.
People of Jerusalem,
let your tears flow like a river
all day and all night!
Do not stop weeping;
do not let your eyes rest from crying.

QOPH

19 Get up and cry out during the night,
right when the night watches begin!
Tell the Lord everything that is in your heart, holding nothing back, like water pouring out.
Raise your hands and pray to him
for your children to survive,
because they are fainting from hunger
on every street corner.

RESH

20 Yahweh, look at what you have done and pay attention!
Think about whom you have treated this way!
Women should never have to eat their own children,
the babies they lovingly cared for!
No one should kill priests and prophets
inside your own holy place!

SIN

21 People of every age lie dead on the ground in the streets.
The enemy has killed all our youth.
On the day you were angry, you let the enemy kill them;
you let them slaughter them mercilessly.

TAW

22 You called enemies to attack me from every direction,
as if you were summoning guests to come to a feast.
On the day Yahweh was angry,
no one escaped and no one survived.
The children I carried and raised,
my enemy has destroyed them all.

3 ALEPH

1 I am a man who has suffered greatly
because God punished me when he was very angry.
2 He sent me into a place where I only suffer
and nothing good happens to me.
3 He keeps acting against me again and again,
all day long.

BETH

4 He afflicted my body
and broke my bones.
5 He attacked me on every side
and caused me to suffer terribly.
6 He made me feel hopeless,
like no one remembers me.

GIMEL

7 He has completely trapped me
so that I cannot escape.
8 Even though I beg him to help me,
he refuses to listen when I pray.
9 He has blocked every way forward for me
so that I cannot make any progress in my life.

DALETH

10 He waited to attack me like a bear hiding to ambush its prey,
like a lion crouching in a hidden place.
11 He ruined my plans
and destroyed me;
he made me poor.
12 He deliberately chose to attack me
and made me the one he would harm.

HE

13 He deliberately caused me intense suffering.
14 All my own people mock me
constantly with their songs.
15 He has caused me to suffer
so much that I cannot bear it.

WAW

16 He completely humiliated me
and degraded me.

17 God took away all my peace;
I no longer remember what happiness feels like.
18 So I said to myself, “I cannot endure any longer,
and I have no more reason to hope in Yahweh.”

ZAYIN

19 Yahweh, remember how I have suffered and wandered;
I have suffered so very greatly.
20 I keep thinking about it over and over,
and it makes me deeply depressed.
21 Yet when I think about this one thing,
I find reason to hope:

HETH

22 Yahweh never stops faithfully loving us,
and he never stops showing us mercy.
23 Every morning he shows us mercy again;
he is always faithful to us.
24 I said to myself, “Yahweh is all that I need;
so I will confidently wait for him.”

TETH

25 Yahweh is good to everyone who depends on him,
to everyone who hopes that Yahweh will help him.
26 It is good to wait quietly
for Yahweh to save us.
27 It is good for a person
to endure suffering patiently while still young.

YODH

28 A person should accept his situation quietly and not complain
when God causes him to suffer.
29 He should bow down with his face to the ground,
because there may still be reason to hope.
30 He should offer his cheek to the one who hits him
and accept all the insults people give him.

KAPH

31 The Lord does not reject people forever.
32 Even though he causes people to grieve,
he will show them mercy because he always faithfully loves them.
33 He does not enjoy causing people to suffer
or making them grieve.

LAMEDH

34 When people crush all the prisoners in a land under their feet,
35 when they cheat someone and deny him what he deserves
right in front of the Most High God,
36 when they treat someone unfairly in his legal dispute—the Lord does not approve of any of these things.

MEM

37 No one can simply speak and make something happen
unless the Lord has commanded it.
38 The Most High God is the one who decides
both the bad things and the good things that happen.

39 No living person should complain
when God punishes him for his sins.

NUN

40 Instead, we should carefully examine how we have been living,
and we should turn back to Yahweh.
41 We should sincerely pray, raising our hands to God in heaven:
42 "We have sinned and rebelled against you,
and you have not forgiven us.

SAMEKH

43 Because you were angry, you chased after us;
you killed us without showing us any mercy.
44 You made yourself unreachable
so that you did not hear any of our prayers.
45 You have made the other nations treat us
as though we are nothing but garbage and filth.

AYIN

46 All our enemies
have spoken hateful things against us.
47 We have experienced nothing but fear and danger,
ruin and destruction."
48 Many tears flow from my eyes
because enemies have destroyed my people.

PE

49 My tears pour out and will not stop;
they will not end
50 until Yahweh looks down
and sees us from heaven.
51 What I see makes me grieve deeply
because of what has happened to all the women of my city.

TSADHE

52 My enemies relentlessly pursued me without any reason,
even though I had done nothing wrong.
53 They threw me into a pit to kill me
and dropped stones on top of me.
54 Water rose over my head,
and I said to myself, “I am going to die!”

QOPH

55 I called out to you, Yahweh,
from the deepest part of that pit.
56 You heard me;
do not ignore me when I cry out to you for help!
57 You came near when I called to you
and said, “Do not be afraid!”

RESH

58 Lord, you defended me;
you saved my life.
59 Yahweh, you have seen how my enemies have wronged me;
make things right for me!

60 You have seen how they want to take revenge on me
and all the things they have planned to do to me.

SIN

61 Yahweh, you have heard them insult me
and all the things they have planned to do to me.
62 Those who oppose me whisper and mutter things
about me all day long.
63 Look at them! No matter what they are doing,
they make fun of me in their songs.

TAW

64 Yahweh, pay them back
for what they have done!
65 Make them stubborn,
and let your curse fall on them.
66 Because you are angry with them, chase them and destroy them
so they no longer exist anywhere on earth.

4 ALEPH

1 How terrible that the people of Jerusalem, who used to be so valuable, have now become completely worthless!
The enemy has thrown out the precious young men
at every street corner.

BETH

2 People once considered the young men of Zion to be extremely valuable,

but now everyone treats them as completely worthless,
like ordinary clay pots that a potter makes.

GIMEL

3 Even jackals nurse their young,
but the women among my people have neglected their own children
and have stopped caring for them.

DALETH

4 The babies are so thirsty
that their tongues stick to the roofs of their mouths.
The children beg for food,
but no one gives them any.

HE

5 People who used to eat the finest food
now starve in the streets.
People whose parents raised them wearing expensive clothes
now search through garbage heaps for something to eat.

WAW

6 God has punished my people more severely
than he punished the people of Sodom.
He destroyed Sodom in an instant,
and nobody cried for it.

ZAYIN

7 Jerusalem's most honored people used to look very pure and healthy.
They had strong, attractive bodies
and appeared very vigorous.

HETH

8 But now they look so dark and thin
that no one recognizes them in the streets.
Their skin has shriveled tightly over their bones
and has dried out completely.

TETH

9 Those who died quickly in battle were better off
than those who died slowly from starvation,
because the starving people wasted away gradually
since no food grew in the fields.

YODH

10 Women who were normally very compassionate
cooked their own children.
They ate them as food
when the enemy destroyed Jerusalem.

KAPH

11 Yahweh expressed all of his anger against Jerusalem.
He burned the city with fire
and destroyed it down to its very foundations.

LAMEDH

12 No king anywhere on the earth,
and no one else in the whole world,
believed that an enemy
could ever enter the city of Jerusalem.

MEM

13 But it happened because Jerusalem's prophets sinned
and her priests did evil things.
They killed innocent people
right there in the city.

NUN

14 Those prophets and priests wandered through the streets,
confused and unable to find their way.
The blood of the people they had killed made them so unclean that no one would touch even their clothes.

SAMEKH

15 People shouted at them, "Go away! You are unclean!
Do not touch us!"
So those priests and prophets fled and wandered from place to place,
but even the people in other nations said, "They cannot stay here."

AYIN

16 Yahweh himself scattered them

and no longer watches over them.
People in those nations do not respect our priests
and do not show any kindness to our elders.

PE

17 We kept watching and waiting for a nation to come and help us,
but no help ever came.
The nation we hoped would rescue us could not save us.

TSADHE

18 Our enemies tracked us so closely
that we could not even walk through our own city squares.
The time for our destruction was near,
and our final days had come.

QOPH

19 Those who chased us were extremely fast.
They pursued us over the mountains
and ambushed us in the desert.

RESH

20 Our enemies captured the king whom Yahweh had chosen to lead us,
the one who kept us alive.
We had said about him,
"He will protect us even if we have to live among other nations."

SIN

21 The people of Edom who live in the land of Uz
may be happy now about what has happened to Jerusalem,
but Yahweh will punish them too.
He will cause them to suffer greatly and be completely humiliated.

TAW

22 Yahweh will finish punishing the people of Jerusalem,
and he will not keep them in exile any longer.
However, he will punish the people of Edom
and expose all the evil things they have done.

A prayer for God's mercy

5 **1** Yahweh, think about what has happened to us.
Pay attention and see how people have disgraced us.
2 Our enemies have taken our property and given it to people we do not know;
they have seized our homes and given them to people who are not Israelites.
3 We have no fathers to care for us;
our mothers have no husbands.
4 We have to pay money to drink our own water,
and we have to buy the wood that we need.
5 Our enemies chase us and never let up;
we are exhausted, but they do not let us rest.
6 We surrendered to Egypt and Assyria
so that we could get enough food to survive.
7 Our ancestors sinned and then they died,
but we are the ones suffering for what they did wrong.

8 People who used to be slaves now rule over us,

and no one can rescue us from their power.

9 We risk our lives when we go out to get food,
because violent people in the wilderness will kill us.

10 Our skin burns with fever
because we are starving so badly.

11 Our enemies raped women in Zion
and young women in the towns of Judah.

12 Our enemies hung our leaders by their hands;
they did not respect our elders.

13 They forced our young men to grind flour with millstones,
and boys staggered under heavy loads of firewood.

14 Our elders no longer gather to make decisions,
and our young men no longer play music.

15 We no longer feel happy;
instead of dancing, we grieve.

16 We have lost the honor that we once had.
How terrible it is for us, because we have sinned!

17 Because of all this, we feel sick inside;
because of these things, we cannot stop crying.

18 We are sad because Mount Zion lies empty with no one living there;
foxes roam through it.

19 But you, Yahweh, rule forever!
You have authority over every generation.

20 It feels as though you have forgotten us completely
and abandoned us for such a long time.

21 Yahweh, please bring us back to yourself so that we may return;
make our lives as good as they were before.

22 Please do not completely reject us
or stay extremely angry with us forever!

Daniel

1

1 After King Jehoiakim had been ruling Judah for almost three years, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem with his army and surrounded the city. **2** After two years, the Lord allowed Nebuchadnezzar to capture Jehoiakim, the king of Judah. They also captured some of the things that the priests used in God's temple. They brought them back to Shinar, and Nebuchadnezzar put them in the treasury of the temple of his god.

3 Then Nebuchadnezzar commanded Ashpenaz, the chief official in his palace, to bring some Israelite men to Babylon. He wanted men who belonged to important families, including the family of the king of Judah. **4** He wanted young men who were healthy, handsome, and very intelligent. They needed to be people who had learned and understood many things. They had to be capable of working in the palace. People were to teach them the language and literature of the Chaldeans. **5** The king told his servants to give them each day the same food and wine that he ate and drank. He told them to train them for three years. After that, they could work for him.

6 Among the Judeans whom Ashpenaz brought to Babylon were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. **7** The chief official gave them Babylonian names. He called Daniel Belteshazzar. He called Hananiah Shadrach. He called Mishael Meshach. And he called Azariah Abednego.

8 But Daniel resolved not to make himself ritually unclean by eating the same food that the king ate or drinking the same wine that he drank. So he asked the chief official for permission to eat and drink something else. **9** God caused the chief official to respect Daniel and to want to help him. **10** However, the chief official told Daniel, "My master, the king, ordered us to give you his own food and drink. So I am afraid of what he might do to me if I let you eat something else. Suppose he saw that you were not as healthy as the other young men who are your age. Then he might execute me!"

11 So Daniel spoke instead to the man whom the chief official had appointed to care for
him and for Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. **12** He asked him, “Please let us try something for
ten days. Give us only beans, grains, and vegetables to eat and only water to drink. **13** Then
examine us and see how we look. Compare us to the other young men who are eating the same
food as the king. Based on what you see, decide what food you will let us eat.” **14** The man
agreed to do what Daniel suggested. He let them try eating and drinking something different
for ten days.

15 After those ten days, he saw that Daniel and his friends looked better and healthier than
all the young men who had been eating the same food as the king. **16** So after that, the guard
allowed them to keep eating only beans, grain, and vegetables. He did not make them eat the
same food and drink the same wine as the king.

17 God enabled those four young men to learn what the Babylonians were teaching them.
He enabled them to understand their literature and to learn to think wisely. He enabled Daniel
to understand what visions and dreams meant.

18 The king had said to bring the young men to him at the end of those three years. So the
chief official brought them into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar. **19** The king spoke with each
young man. He realized that none of the others were as capable as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael,
and Azariah. So he included those four young men among his advisors. **20** Whenever the king
asked them to help him understand something, he found that what they told him was much
better than what any of the magicians or sorcerers in his kingdom told him.

21 Daniel remained an advisor in the royal court right up to the time when Cyrus became
king.

2 **1** One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. The dream
worried him very much. As a result, he could not get back to sleep. **2** So he told his servants to
summon his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and other advisors. He wanted them to tell him
what he had dreamed and what it meant. They came and stood in his presence. **3** He told them,
“I have had a dream, and it has worried me. I want to know what I dreamed.”

4 The advisors replied to the king, speaking in Aramaic, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we hope you live for a long time! Tell us what you dreamed, and we will tell you what it means.”

5 But the king replied to them, “I am giving a strict command. If you do not tell me what I dreamed and what it means, I will order my soldiers to cut you into pieces. I will also order them to destroy your houses completely. **6** But if you do tell me what I dreamed and what it means, I will reward you. I will give you splendid gifts, and I will greatly honor you. So tell me what I dreamed and what it means!”

7 But again they replied, “Please tell us what you dreamed, and then we will tell you what it means.”

8 The king responded, “I recognize clearly that you know that I will certainly do what I have said, so you are trying to get more time. **9** But if you do not tell me what I dreamed, I will do to you exactly what I said. I believe that you have all agreed to tell me a false explanation of my dream so that I do not punish you. So I insist that you tell me what I dreamed. Then I will know that you can also tell me what it really means.”

10 The advisors replied to the king, “There is no one on the earth who can tell you what dream you had! That is why no king, even a great and mighty one, has ever asked any of his magicians or enchanters or other advisors to tell him what he dreamed. **11** What you are asking us to do is impossible. The only beings who could tell you what you dreamed are the gods, but they do not live among us people!”

12 When the king heard that, he became extremely angry. He commanded his soldiers to execute all the wise men in Babylon. **13** Because the king had commanded his soldiers to kill all the wise men, some soldiers went to find Daniel and his friends so that they could kill them.

14 Arioch, the commander of the king’s bodyguard, was leading the soldiers who came to kill Daniel and his friends. And Daniel spoke to him wisely and tactfully. **15** He asked Arioch, the king’s officer, “Why did the king give such a harsh command?” Then Arioch explained to Daniel what had happened. **16** Daniel went to the king and asked him to give me some time so that he tell him his dream and what it meant.

17 Then he went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. **18** He asked them to pray to God in heaven and ask him to be merciful to them and show them what the king had dreamed and what it meant. Then the king's soldiers would not kill them, even if they killed the other wise men in Babylon. **19** That night God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised God. **20** He said,

"People should praise God forever!
He is the one who is truly wise and powerful.
21 He controls the different things that happen at various times.
He stops some kings from reigning, and he makes other kings start reigning.
He is the one who enables people to be wise
and to understand difficult things.
22 He reveals things that are very mysterious.
Everything is light where he is,
but he also knows what happens where it is dark.
23 You are the God whom my ancestors worshiped.
I thank you and praise you
because you have made me wise and strong.
You have revealed to us what the king dreamed and what it meant.
So you have done just what we prayed you would do."

24 Then Daniel went to Arioch, the man whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon. He said to him, "Please do not kill us wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him what his dream means."

25 So Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king. He told the king, "Here is one of the men whom our soldiers brought from Judah. He says that he can tell you what your dream means."

26 The king spoke to Daniel. (He called him Belteshazzar.) He asked, "Can you really tell me what I dreamed and what it means?"

27 Daniel replied to him, "No wise man or enchanter or magician or fortuneteller could tell you what you want to know. **28** But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has

shown you, King Nebuchadnezzar, what will happen in the future. This is what you saw in your dream as you were lying on your bed.

29 Your Majesty, while you were sleeping, you dreamed about what is going to happen in the future. God, who reveals secrets, has shown you what is going to happen. **30** I do not know your dream and its meaning because I am wiser than anyone else on earth. It is because God wants you to understand what your dream means. It explains what you were wondering about.

31 Your Majesty, in your dream you saw a giant statue standing in front of you. It was very impressive, and it was shining very brightly. It was frightening to look at it. **32** The head of the statue was pure gold. Its chest and arms were silver. Its belly and thighs were bronze. **33** Its legs were iron, and its feet were partly iron and partly clay. **34** As you watched, someone cut a rock from a mountain, but it was not a human who did that. The rock **tumbled down and** smashed the iron and clay feet of the statue. It broke them into tiny pieces. **35** Immediately the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold parts of the statue also broke into tiny pieces. Those pieces were as small as the chaff that people separate from grain after they harvest it. The wind blew away all those tiny pieces. Nothing remained. But the rock that had smashed the statue became a large mountain that covered the whole earth.

36 That was what you dreamed. Now I will tell you what it means. **37** You are a king who rules over many other kings. God, who rules in heaven, has enabled you to rule over them. He has given you great power and much honor. **38** He has made you the ruler of a great territory. It seems as if you have power over every place where people and animals and birds live. The golden head of the statue represents you.

39 But your kingdom will end, and afterward there will be another great kingdom**, which the silver part of the statue represents**. However, it will not be as great as yours. After that, there will be a third great kingdom, which the bronze part of the statue represents. Its king will rule over a very great territory. **40** After that, there will be a fourth great kingdom. The iron part of the statue represents that kingdom. It will be very strong, just as iron **is so strong that it** crushes and breaks whatever it strikes. The army of this kingdom will conquer the territory of the previous kingdoms as if it were an iron weapon smashing them. **41** You saw that the feet and toes of the statue were partly clay and partly iron. That meant that this kingdom will divide into two parts. You saw that there was iron as well as clay, and that meant that this kingdom

will still be somewhat strong like iron. **42** However, you saw that there was clay as well as iron in the toes of the statue. That meant that some of this kingdom will be weak, like clay that breaks easily, even though some of it will be strong like iron. **43** You saw iron and clay together in the statue's feet and toes. That meant that the rulers of the parts of this kingdom will try to join themselves together through marriage alliances. However, they will not succeed in uniting their realms. After all, iron does not mix with clay.

44 While those kings are ruling, God, who rules everything from heaven, will establish a kingdom that will never end. No one will ever defeat its king and take over his kingdom. He will completely destroy all those kingdoms, but his kingdom will last forever. **45** You saw a rock that someone, but not a human, cut from a mountain. That rock crushed the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold parts of the statue. It represents this last king. Your Majesty, the great God has shown you what will happen in the future. Since I have told you what you actually dreamed, you can trust that I have also told you what it truly means."

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar bowed down in front of Daniel to honor him. He commanded his officials to give Daniel a grain offering and to burn incense to honor him. **47** The king told Daniel, "Your God has enabled you to tell me the meaning of my dream. So he truly is greater than any of the gods that other nations worship. He is more powerful than any earthly king. He reveals secrets that no one else could know."

48 Then the king made Daniel a powerful royal official. He gave him many lavish gifts. He appointed him to rule the entire province of Babylon. He also made him the leader of the officials who governed the wise men of Babylon. **49** At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to important positions in the province of Babylon. Daniel himself worked in the king's palace.

3

1 King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his craftsmen to make a giant statue and cover it completely with gold. It was 27 meters high and 2. 7 meters wide. They set it up on the Plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. **2** Then the king sent messengers to the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and the other officials in the province. He ordered them to come to the dedication of the statue that he had set up. **3** So the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges,

the magistrates, and the other officials in the province came for the dedication of the statue that the king had set up. They all stood in front of that statue.

4 Then a royal herald shouted loudly, “You people who come from many different nations and groups and who speak many different languages, listen to what the king has commanded! **5** When you hear the music of horns, flutes, lyres, zithers, harps, bagpipes, and other instruments, you must bow down to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue. **6** The king’s soldiers will immediately throw anyone who does not do that into a furnace that is blazing with fire!”

7 So when the officials who had gathered there heard the music of horns, flutes, lyres, zithers, harps, and other instruments, they bowed down to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue.

8 But because of something they saw, some of the king’s advisors then went to him and said bad things about the Jews **who were provincial officials**. **9** They told King Nebuchadnezzar, “Your Majesty, we hope that you will live for a very long time! **10** You commanded all of us officials to bow down and worship your golden statue when we heard the music of horns, flutes, lyres, zithers, harps, bagpipes, and other instruments. **11** You said that if anyone did not do that, you would command your solders to throw him into a furnace that was blazing with fire. **12** But there are some men who are not obeying your decree, Your Majesty. They are men from Judah whom you have appointed to be officials in the province of Babylon. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They refuse to worship your gods. They did not bow down to your golden statue.”

13 When he heard that, Nebuchadnezzar became extremely angry. He commanded his soldiers to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to him. When those three men arrived, **14** Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to worship my gods? Did you not bow down to my golden statue? **15** **I will not punish you** if you are willing to bow down and worship my statue when you hear the music of horns, flutes, lyres, zithers, harps, bagpipes, and other instruments. But if you do not bow down, I will immediately command my soldiers to throw you into a furnace that is blazing with fire. Then what god would be able to rescue you from my power?”

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to **make a decision about what to do and then** tell you whether we are willing to bow down to your statue. **17** If that happened, our God, whom we worship, would be able to rescue us from the furnace. He could rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. **18** But we want you to know, Your Majesty, that even if he did not rescue us, we would never worship your gods. We would not bow down to your golden statue.”

19 When Nebuchadnezzar heard that, he became extremely angry. He had been regarding Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with a generous expression, but now he looked at them with a very hostile expression. He ordered his soldiers to heat the furnace as hot as possible, hotter than it had ever been before. **20** Then he commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into that extremely hot furnace. **21** So those soldiers tied up the three men and threw them into the furnace. The men were still wearing their robes, tunics, turbans, and other clothes. **22** The king had given a very stern command, so his servants had made the furnace extremely hot. As a result, the heat of the furnace killed the strong soldiers who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into it. **23** And those three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell into the roaring flames with ropes around them.

24 But then King Nebuchadnezzar saw something that amazed him. He quickly jumped up and asked his advisors, “Did we not tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?”

The advisors replied, “Yes, Your Majesty, we did.”

25 Nebuchadnezzar responded, “But look! I see four men! They have no ropes around them, and they are walking around in the flames. The fire is not hurting them! And the fourth man looks like a divine being!”

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came closer to the opening of the furnace. He shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you men who worship the Supreme God, come out of there! Come over here!” So they stepped out of the furnace.

27 Then the satraps, prefects, governors, and royal counselors crowded around them. They saw that the flames had not harmed them. The flames had not even singed any of the hair on their heads or scorched any of their clothes! There was not even any smell of smoke on them!

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “People should praise the God whom Shadrach, Meshach,
and Abednego worship! He sent one of his angels to rescue these three men who worship him
and who trusted him to protect them. They were willing to die rather than worship any other
god other than their own God. As a result, they made my punishment have no effect.
29 Therefore, I am now making this decree: ‘No person, no matter what nation or group he
comes from or what language he speaks, may criticize the God whom Shadrach, Meshach, and
Abednego worship. If anyone does, I will order my soldiers to cut him into pieces. I will also
order them to destroy his house completely. That is because there is no other god who can
rescue people like this!’”

30 Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego more important positions in the
province of Babylon.

4 1 I, King Nebuchadnezzar, am writing to all of you people who live in my empire. You
come from many different nations and groups, and you speak many different languages. I hope
that all is well with you. 2 I want you to know the wonderful things that the Supreme God has
done for me.

3 He performs great miracles;
yes, he does very wonderful things.
His kingdom will last forever;
indeed, he will rule over every generation of people.

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was reigning firmly over my kingdom, and I was living comfortably
in my palace. 5 But one night I had a dream that scared me. What I saw in my dream as I was
asleep in bed distressed me greatly. 6 So I sent an order to all the wise men in Babylon to
come and tell me what my dream meant. 7 And various magicians, enchanters, advisors, and
fortunetellers came to me. I told them what I had dreamed, but they could not tell me what it
meant. 8 But finally a certain man, Daniel, came to me. One of my officials had given him the
name Belteshazzar, which includes the name of one of my gods, Bel. The spirit of the holy gods
is in him. I told him what I had dreamed. 9 I said, “Belteshazzar, you are the leader of my
advisors. I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, so no mystery is too hard for you to
explain. So I will tell you the dream that I saw, and you tell me what it means. 10 This is what

I dreamed as I was lying in bed. In my dream, I saw a tree in the middle of the land. It was very tall. **11** It grew very big, and it became strong. It seemed that its top reached up to the sky, so that everyone in the world could see it. **12** It had beautiful leaves, and it produced much fruit for people to eat. Wild animals rested in the shade of that tree, and birds built nests in its branches. Many creatures came and got food from that tree. **13** But while I was still asleep and dreaming, I saw a holy angel coming down from heaven. **14** The angel shouted loudly, 'Cut down that tree, and cut off its branches! Shake it until its leaves fall off, and throw away its fruit. Chase away the animals that are lying in its shade and the birds that are in its branches. **15** But leave the stump of the tree with its roots in the ground where grass grows. Fasten a band of iron and bronze around the stump **to protect it from splitting**. Let the dew that forms from the air keep it damp.' **That tree seemed to represent a person, since the angel then said,** 'Make him eat grass from the ground as animals do. **16** For seven years, make him have the mind of an animal instead of the mind of a human being. **17** The holy angels have decided that this will be his punishment. They want people to know that the Supreme God rules over human kingdoms. He chooses who will be their kings. He even makes people who were not important into kings.' **18** That is what I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw in my dream. Now I want you, Belteshazzar, to tell me what it means. I am asking you because none of my other wise men could tell me what it meant. But I believe you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you." **19** But Daniel, whom we called Belteshazzar, did not say anything for a while. That was because he knew what the dream meant, and it distressed him. Finally I said to him, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream and its meaning distress you." He replied, "Sir, I hope that what your dream shows will happen to your enemies, who hate you**, and not to you**. **20** In your dream you saw a very tall, strong tree. It seemed that its top reached up to the sky, so that everyone in the world could see it. **21** It had beautiful leaves, and it produced much fruit for people to eat. Wild animals rested in the shade of that tree, and birds built nests in its branches. **22** Your Majesty, that tree represents you! You have become great and strong. It is as if you rule everything from the ground up to the sky, all throughout the world. **23** But in your dream, you saw a holy angel coming down from heaven. That angel said, 'Cut down that tree so that it does not keep growing! But leave the stump of the tree with its roots in the ground where grass grows. Fasten a band of iron and bronze around the stump **to protect it from splitting**. Let the dew that forms from the air keep it damp. Make the person **whom that tree represents** eat what wild animals do for seven years.' **24** This is what your dream means, Your Majesty. It shows

what the Supreme God has decided will happen to you. **25** **You will no longer have a human mind, and so** you will no longer live among people. Instead, you will live with wild animals. This will require you to eat grass as oxen do. The dew that forms from the air will make your body damp. You will live that way for seven years, until you recognize that the Supreme God rules over human kingdoms. He chooses who will be their kings. **26** However, the angel said to leave the stump of the tree in the ground with its roots. That means that you will rule your kingdom again when you recognize that God rules over human kingdoms. **27** So that this does not happen to you, Your Majesty, please do what I advise. Stop sinning and do what is right. Stop doing oppressive things and help poor people. If you do that, perhaps you will continue to reign comfortably." **28** But everything that the dream depicted happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. **29** A year later, he was walking around on the flat roof of his royal palace in Babylon. **30** As he looked out over the city, he said aloud, "This is the great city of Babylon that I have built as the place where I rule! I have built it by my own great power to show people what a glorious king I am!" **31** While he was still saying that, someone spoke to him from heaven. He said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, this decree is about you: you are no longer the ruler of this kingdom! **32** You will no longer live among people. Instead, you will live with wild animals. This will require you to eat grass as oxen do. You will live that way for seven years, until you recognize that the Supreme God rules over human kingdoms. He chooses who will be their kings." **33** Immediately what this person had said happened to me, Nebuchadnezzar. I no longer lived among people. Instead, I ate grass as oxen do. The dew that forms from the air made my body damp. I lived like that until my hair became as long as eagles' feathers. My fingernails became like birds' claws. **34** But at the end of those seven years, I, Nebuchadnezzar, prayed to God, and he gave me a human mind again.

Then I worshiped the Supreme God,
and I praised and honored him, who lives forever.
He will rule forever;
indeed, he will be the king of every generation of people.
35 Compared with him, all the people in the world are insignificant.
He does whatever he wants with the angels in heaven
and with us people who live on the earth.
No one can stop him from doing what he wants

or tell him, “You may not do that.”

36 Then I was able to think reasonably again. I became the very powerful ruler of a glorious kingdom once more. My advisors and my nobles treated me respectfully again. Once more I ruled my kingdom firmly, and I became much more powerful than I had been before.
37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, greatly praise and honor God, the king who rules in heaven. Everything that he does is right, and he always treats people fairly. When people become too proud, he is able to humble them.

5 **1** King Belshazzar **of Babylon** invited a thousand of his officials to a great feast. He drank a lot of wine with them. **2** He became drunk, and he commanded his servants to bring the gold and silver cups that his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to drink from them with his officials, his wives, and his concubines. **3** So his servants brought in the gold cups that Nebuchadnezzar’s solders had taken from the temple where God had been present in Jerusalem. Then the king, his officials, his wives, and his concubines drank wine from those cups. **4** They drank toasts to honor their gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone idols.

5 Suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand appeared. They started writing on the plaster of a section of the wall of the royal palace. A lamp was shining on that section, so the king could see the palm of the hand as it was writing. **6** That made him very afraid, and his face turned pale. His knees started shaking, and his legs became so weak that he could not stand up.

7 He shouted loudly to tell his servants to bring in his magicians, advisors, and fortunetellers. He said, “If any of them can read this writing and tell me what it means, I will give him a purple robe to wear. I will also give him a gold chain to put around his neck. I will also make him the most powerful ruler in my kingdom except for me and the crown prince.”

8 Then all the wise men whom the king had summoned came in. But none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant. **9** This made King Belshazzar even more afraid. His face became even paler. The officials he had invited to the feast did not know what to do.

10 The king’s mother learned that the king and his nobles were talking about what to do. So she came into the room where they were having the feast. She said to Belshazzar, “Your

Majesty, I hope that you will live for a very long time! Please do not let this frighten you and make your face turn pale. **11** There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. When your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar was ruling, they discovered that this man could understand many things. He was very wise, like the gods. Your grandfather King Nebuchadnezzar, who was one of the kings before you, made him the leader of all the different wise men of Babylon. **12** Nebuchadnezzar did that because he has very good character. He can learn and understand many things. He is able to say what dreams mean. He can solve puzzles and explain things that are very difficult to understand. That man is Daniel. The king gave him a new name, Belteshazzar. If you summon Daniel, he will tell you what this writing means."

13 So the king had his servants bring Daniel to him. The king said to him, "You must be Daniel. I understand that you are one of the Judeans whom the soldiers of my grandfather Nebuchadnezzar brought here as prisoners from Judah. **14** I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you, that you are very intelligent, and that you are very wise. **15** I want you to know that I brought in my wise men, such as my enchanters, to read this writing and tell me what it means. But they have not been able to do that. **16** But then someone told me about you. You are able to say what dreams mean and explain things that are very difficult to understand. If you really can read this writing and tell me what it means, I will give you a purple robe to wear. I will also give you a gold chain to put around your neck. I will also make you the most powerful ruler in my kingdom except for me and the crown prince"

17 Then Daniel replied to the king, "You may keep your gifts or give them to someone else. But I will read this writing for you and tell you what it means.

18 Your Majesty, this is why the hand wrote that for you. The Supreme God made Nebuchadnezzar, one of the men who ruled before you, a great king. People honored him and admired him. **19** Because God made him such a powerful king, people who came from many different nations and groups and who spoke many different languages were very afraid of him. If he wanted someone to die, he could command his soldiers to execute that person. If he wanted someone to live, he could command his soldiers not to harm that person. If he wanted to give someone an important position, he could do that. If he wanted to make someone unimportant, he could do that too. **20** However, he began to think of himself as very great. He became stubborn, and he acted arrogantly. As a result, God made him no longer the king. He was not glorious anymore. **21** He no longer lived among people. He had a mind like an animal.

He lived among wild donkeys. He ate grass as oxen do. The dew that forms from the air made his body damp. He lived that way until he recognized that the Supreme God rules over human kingdoms. He chooses who will be their kings.

22 You, Belshazzar, have now become the king. You knew all these things, but you have not been humble. **23** Instead, you have considered yourself to be greater than God, who reigns in heaven. You have commanded your servants to bring you the cups from his temple in Jerusalem. You, your officials, your wives, and your concubines have been drinking from those cups. You have been making toasts in honor of your own gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone idols. Those idols represent gods that **are not real. They** cannot see, hear, or know anything! You have not honored the God who keeps you alive and who controls everything that happens to you. **24** So God sent this hand to write this message to you.

25 The hand wrote these words: 'Mene,' 'Mene,' 'Tekel,' and 'Parsin.'

26 This is what these words mean.

'Mene' means 'counted.' This means that God has counted how many days you have been king, and he has decided that there should not be any more.

27 'Tekel' means 'weighed.' It is as if God has weighed you on a scale and found that you do not weigh what you should.

28 'Peres' means 'separated.' God is going to separate your kingdom from you. The Medes and the Persians will conquer it, and they will rule it instead of you."

29 Then Belshazzar ordered his servants to put a purple robe on Daniel and a gold chain around his neck. He proclaimed that Daniel would be the most powerful ruler in his kingdom except for him and the crown prince

30 But that same night, enemy soldiers got into the city and killed Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans. **31** Darius the Mede became the king instead. He was 62 years old.

6 **1** King Darius decided to appoint 120 satraps to govern the different parts of his kingdom.

2 He also appointed three sareks to supervise those satraps. To make sure that none of them

cheated the king, those satraps had to give them regular accounts of their work. Daniel was one of the sareks. **3** Daniel had very good character, so he soon showed that he was more capable than all the satraps and the other sareks. As a result, the king planned to put him in charge of the whole kingdom. **4** Then the satraps and other sareks tried to find something they could accuse Daniel of doing wrong in his work for the king. But Daniel was very reliable, so he had not done anything negligent or corrupt. So the other royal officials could not find anything they could accuse him of doing wrong. **5** So they concluded, "The only thing we will find to accuse Daniel about will be something that he has to do to obey his God."

6 So the sareks and satraps went together to the king and told him, "King Darius, we hope that you will live for a very long time! **7** All of your sareks, rulers satraps, counselors, and governors have agreed that you should make a law and enforce it strictly. Your Majesty, the law would be that for the next 30 days, no one may ask any god or man except you for anything. If anyone does that, your servants will throw him into a pit full of lions. **8** So, Your Majesty, please make this law. Have one of your scribes write it out, and then sign it. No one will then be able to change it, because the laws of the Medes and Persians are permanent." **9** So King Darius made the law, and when one of his scribes wrote it out, he signed it.

10 When Daniel learned that the king had made that law and signed it, he went home. He went to his upstairs room and opened the windows so that he could look toward Jerusalem. He knelt down and prayed and gave thanks to God. He did that three times each day, just as he had done before. **11** Then the royal officials came to his house together, and they saw that he was praying to God and asking him to help him. **12** So they went back to the king and talked with him about the law he had made. They said, "Your Majesty, you signed a law that for the next 30 days, no one may ask any god or man except you for anything. The law said that if anyone did that, your servants would throw him into a pit full of lions." The king replied, "Yes, I made that law. And the laws of the Medes and Persians are permanent."

13 Then they told the king, "Your Majesty, that man Daniel, who is one of the Judeans whom our soldiers brought here as prisoners, is disregarding you. He is not obeying the law that you signed. He is still praying to his God three times each day!" **14** When the king heard that, it distressed him greatly. He determined to save Daniel. For the rest of that day, he tried hard to find a way to rescue him.

15 But in the evening, those royal officials went back to the king together and told him, "Your Majesty, you know what our Median and Persian laws require. If the king makes any rule or law, no one can change it."

16 So the king gave a command, and his servants brought Daniel to him. The king told him, "I hope that your God, whom you obey so faithfully, will rescue you!" Then the servants threw Daniel into a pit full of lions.

17 They put a large stone across the top of the pit. Then the king sealed the stone with the ring he wore that had his royal seal on it. His nobles also sealed it with their rings. That kept anyone from removing the stone and rescuing Daniel. **18** Then the king returned to his palace. **To show how sorry he was for Daniel,** he did not eat any food that evening, and he did not have anyone play music for him. He did not sleep that night.

19 As soon as it became light the next morning, the king got up and went quickly to the pit of lions. **20** As he arrived at the pit where Daniel was, he cried out in distress. He said, "Daniel, the God whom you worship is really alive! Has your God, whom you obey so faithfully, been able to save you from the lions?"

21 Daniel responded, "Your Majesty, I hope that you will live for a very long time! **22** Yes, my God sent an angel to keep the lions from harming me. They did not hurt me at all. God rescued me because he knows that I did not do anything sinful. He also knows that I have not done anything that hurt you, Your Majesty!"

23 This made the king very happy. He commanded his servants to lift Daniel up out of the pit. When they did that, they saw that the lions had not wounded him at all. Daniel had trusted God, and so God had protected him.

24 Then the king commanded his soldiers to arrest the men who had said bad things about Daniel. They threw them into the pit where the lions were. They also threw in their wives and children. While they were still tumbling toward the bottom of the pit, the lions leaped on them and tore them apart.

25 Then King Darius sent a letter to the people who lived in his empire. They were from many different nations and groups, and they spoke many different languages. He wrote, "I

hope that all is well with you. **26** I am making a decree that throughout my empire, people should show great respect to the God whom Daniel worships.

He is the God who is really alive,
and he lives forever.
No one will ever destroy his kingdom;
he will rule forever.
27 He certainly rescues **people who trust him**.
He performs great miracles
in heaven and on earth.
He rescued Daniel by keeping the lions from attacking him!"

28 After this, Daniel was successful for the rest of the time that Darius was king. He was also successful during the time when Cyrus the Persian was king.

7 **1** During the first year that Belshazzar was the king of Babylon, Daniel saw things in a dream one night as he was lying on his bed. The next morning, he wrote down the main points of what he had dreamed.

2 Daniel wrote, "This is what I saw in the dream I had last night. Strong winds were blowing from four directions and making big waves in the Great Sea. **3** I saw four great beasts coming up out of the water. Each one was different from the others.

4 The first beast looked a lion. However, it had wings like an eagle's wings. But as I watched, someone tore off its wings. Then this beast reared up and stood on two legs, as people do. It also became able to think as people do.

5 The second beast that I saw looked like a bear. One of its sides was higher than the other. It was holding three ribs in its mouth with its teeth. Someone told it, 'Go and eat as much meat as you want!'

6 The next beast that I saw looked like a leopard, but it had four wings like bird's wings on its back. It had four heads. It received authority to rule many people.

7 The next thing I saw in my dream last night was a fourth beast. It was very powerful and very terrifying. It had huge iron teeth. It killed the other beasts and devoured them, and then it trampled on their carcasses. It was different from the other three beasts. It had ten horns on its head.

8 I was looking at those horns, and I saw a little horn grow up in the middle of them. It tore out three of the other horns. I saw that this little horn had eyes that were like humans eyes. It also had a mouth, and it was speaking very boastfully.

9 Then, as I watched,

some beings brought in some thrones.
God, who has always existed, sat on one of the thrones.
His clothes were as white as snow,
and his hair was as white as pure wool.
His throne **was like a chariot; it** was blazing with fire,
and its wheels were also blazing with fire.
10 A stream of fire
was rushing out in front of him.
Many thousands of people were there serving him,
and millions of other people were standing in front of him **ready to serve him**.
Judges began a court session,
and they opened books **that recorded what people had done**.

11 I heard the little horn speaking very boastfully, so I looked over at it. As I watched, someone killed the fourth beast and threw its body into the fire to burn it up completely.
12 The other three beasts lost their authority to rule, but they were able to continue living for a little while.

13 The next thing I saw in my dream last night was someone who resembled a human being. He was riding on the clouds in the sky. He got to where God was, the one who has always existed, and God's servants brought him to his throne. **14** God honored him and gave him the authority to rule as king. People from every nation and group and who speak every

language will obey him. He will rule forever; he will never stop ruling. No one will ever destroy the kingdom that he rules.

15 As for me, Daniel, what I saw in my dream scared me. I felt very upset inside. **16** I went up to one of those who were standing in front of God's throne. I asked him to tell me what all of this meant. So he told me what the things in my dream meant so that I could understand them.

17 He said, "The four great beasts represent four kingdoms that will become powerful in the world. **18** But the Supreme God will give power to his people to rule, and they will rule forever and ever."

19 Then I wanted to know exactly what the fourth beast represented. That beast was different from the other three beasts. It was very terrifying. It had iron teeth and bronze claws. It killed the other beasts and devoured them, and then it trampled on their carcasses. **20** I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and the little horn that grew up in the middle of them. It tore out three of the other horns. It had **human** eyes and a mouth. It spoke very boastfully, and it looked more powerful than the other horns. **21** In my dream, I saw this horn attack God's people. It was defeating them, **22** but then God, who has always existed, came and decided in favor of the people who belonged to him, the Supreme God. Then it was time for them to receive authority to rule.

23 The one I was speaking with told me, "The fourth beast represents a fourth empire that will become powerful in the world. That empire will be different from the other empires that were before it. Its army will conquer other kingdoms throughout the world. It will defeat them badly and destroy them. **24** The ten horns of this beast represent ten kings who will rule that empire. Another king will succeed them. He will be different from the previous kings, and he will conquer three other kings. **25** He will say insulting things about the Supreme God, and he will oppress the people who belong to him. He will try to change their religious festivals and laws. He will have power over them for a time, times, and half a time.

26 But then there will be a session of the heavenly court. The court will take away that king's authority. That will be the end of his kingdom forever. **27** Then the people who belong

to the Supreme God will receive great honor and the power to rule every kingdom in the world. The kingdom of the Supreme God will last forever. All earthly rulers will be his subjects."

28 That is what I saw in my dream. As I, Daniel, thought about these things, they really scared me. My face became pale. But I did not tell anyone about the dream I had."

8 **1** During the third year that Belshazzar was the king of Babylon, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that I had earlier. **2** In that vision, I saw that I was in Susa, the capital city of the province of Elam. I saw that I was standing alongside the Ulai Canal. **3** I looked up and saw a ram standing alongside the canal. It had two long horns. One of the horns was longer than the other. The ram had grown the longer horn after the shorter one. **4** I saw the ram butting away the animals that were around it in all directions. No other animal could resist it, and none could rescue other animals from it. The ram did whatever it wanted to do, and it became very powerful.

5 I kept looking, and the next thing I saw was a goat coming from the west. It ran across the whole world so quickly that its feed seemed not to touch the ground. This goat had one very large horn in the middle of its forehead. **6** It came to the ram that I had seen standing alongside the canal, the ram that had two horns. It was very angry, and it ran straight at the ram. **7** I saw that when the goat got to the ram, it struck it furiously. That broke off the ram's two horns, and so the ram was not able to defend itself. The goat knocked the ram down and trampled on it. No one could rescue the ram from the goat. **8** The goat became very powerful. But when its power was very great, its large horn broke off. Four other large horns grew in its place. They pointed to the north, south, east, and west.

9 A little horn grew from one of those horns. It became very large. It pointed toward the south and then toward the east and then toward the beautiful land **of Israel**. **10** That horn became so strong that it even attacked the angels in heaven. It threw some of the angels and some of the stars from the sky onto the earth, and it trampled on them. **11** The horn wanted people to worship it instead of **Yahweh,** the commander of the heavenly army. It prevented his priests from offering the regular sacrifices to him each morning and evening. It also ruined his temple. **12** Many Israelites disobeyed Yahweh and instead obeyed the horn, who had stopped

the priests from offering sacrifices to Yahweh each morning and evening. The horn prevented people from worshiping Yahweh truly. It succeeded in doing what it wanted to do.

13 Then I heard an angel saying something. Another angel asked the one who was talking, "This vision shows that someone will prevent the priests from sacrificing to Yahweh. It shows that many of the Israelites will disobey Yahweh and that this will allow someone to ruin his temple and harm his people. How long will these things continue?"

14 The other angel replied, "They will continue for a total of 2,300 evenings and mornings, **or 1,150 days**. After that, the temple will become a holy place again."

15 After I, Daniel, had seen this vision, I was trying to understand what it meant. Suddenly someone in the form of a human being appeared in front of me. **16** Then I heard someone calling out from the middle of the Ulai Canal. His voice sounded human. He said, "Gabriel, explain to him what his vision means."

17 So Gabriel came and stood next to me. This made me so afraid that I fell onto the ground. But he told me, "You mortal, understand that your vision shows something that will happen when the world is about to end."

18 As he was speaking to me, I fainted. I was unconscious on the ground, but Gabriel took hold of me and picked me up so I was standing again.

19 Then he said, "I have come to tell you what will happen as God finishes punishing people. He has determined to do that at the end of the world, and your vision shows this.
20 You saw a ram that had two horns. Those horns represent the kingdoms of Media and Persia. **21** The goat that you saw represents the kingdom of Javan. The large horn in the middle of its forehead represents its first king. **22** The four horns that grew after the first horn broke off represent four kingdoms into which his kingdom will divide. None of them will be as strong as the original kingdom was.

23 The people in those kingdoms will become very wicked. Near the time when those kingdoms will end, one of them will have a king who defeats his enemies in battle. That king will also be very deceitful. **24** That king will become very powerful, but only because God allows that to happen. He will violently destroy many things, and he will succeed in doing

what he wants to do. He will destroy powerful opponents, and he will also destroy some of God's people. 25 Because he will be so treacherous, he will achieve what he wants by deceiving people. He will be very proud of himself. He will make people think that they are safe, but he will then destroy many of them. He will even try to oppose God, who rules over all earthly kings. But God, not a human being, will destroy him.

26 Your vision showed how this king will prevent Yahweh's priests from sacrificing to him each morning and evening. That will happen. But **for now,** do not tell others what you saw, because those things will not happen until many years from now."

27 Then I, Daniel, had no strength left. I was sick for several days. After that, I got up and went back to work for the king. But I did not understand the vision, and that disturbed me.

9 1 Darius son of Ahasuerus, who was a Mede, became the next ruler of the Chaldean kingdom. 2 During the first year that Darius was the king, I, Daniel, was studying our holy books. I saw that Yahweh had told the prophet Jeremiah how long Jerusalem would be in a bad condition. It would be for seventy years. 3 **After I read that,** I resolved to ask the Lord God to help us. I prayed to him very earnestly. **To show how sorry I was for our sins,** I ate little food, I wore rough cloth, and I put ashes on my head.

4 As I prayed to Yahweh my God, I admitted that we Israelites had sinned. I said, "Oh Lord, you are the powerful God whom everyone should respect! You keep your promises and you faithfully love people who love you and obey your laws. 5 But we Israelites have sinned against you. We have done things that are wrong. We have done wicked things and rebelled against you. We have disobeyed many of your laws. 6 You sent prophets to bring messages from you to our kings, our other rulers, and our ancestors. They spoke those messages to all the Israelite people. But we did not obey what they told us to do. 7 Lord, you were right to punish us for sinning so seriously against you. But as a result, we are now in a shameful condition. This is true of the Israelites who still live in Jerusalem and other places in Judea. It is also true of the Israelites whose enemies you allowed to take away to other countries. Some of those countries are near Israel, and others are farther away. 8 Yahweh, we have sinned against you, and so we and our kings, our other rulers, and our ancestors are in a shameful condition. 9 I ask you, our Lord and God, to forgive us and treat us kindly, even though we have rebelled

against you. **10** You sent your prophets to speak to us directly and tell us to obey your laws.
But we did not obey what you, our God, said to us through them. **11** All of us Israelite people
have failed to do what your law requires and have done other things instead. We have not
obeyed what you told us to do. We have sinned against you, and as a result, you have made
very bad things happen to us. You swore that you would do that if we sinned so badly. Your
servant Moses wrote this in the law. **12** You said that these things would happen to us and our
rulers, and you have done just what you said. You made a great disaster happen to us. No other
city in the world has experienced something like what has happened to Jerusalem. **13** You have
made this great disaster happen to us just as Moses wrote in the law. Even so, we have not tried
to make you, our God, treat us favorably again. We have not stopped committing sins. We have
not recognized that you tell us the right way to live. **14** Because we did not obey what you told
us, it was right for you, our God, to punish us as you did. You were ready to cause this disaster,
and you made it happen to us when we deserved it. **15** Now here is my request. Lord our God,
you rescued us Israelites from slavery in Egypt by your great power. As a result, you have had
a great reputation ever since then. But we still sinned against you by doing wicked things.
16 Lord, just as you have delivered us in the past, I ask you now to stop being so very angry
with the people of Jerusalem. That is the city where you chose to be present in a special way in
your temple on Mount Zion. I ask this because the people of other nations are saying bad
things about Jerusalem and us Israelites. They are doing that because you have punished us for
the sins that we and our ancestors committed. **17** But now, our God, please do what I, your
servant, am earnestly asking you to do. For the sake of your own reputation, please regard
favorably your temple, which our enemies have ruined. **18** My God, please listen to my prayer
and do what I ask. Please consider carefully that Jerusalem, the city that belongs to you in a
special way, is in ruins. I am not pleading with you to help us because we are good people and
deserve that. I am asking you to help us because you are very merciful. **19** Lord, please listen
to me! Lord, please forgive us! Lord, please do what I am asking you to do! Jerusalem belongs
to you in a special way, and so do we Israelites. So please help us quickly, my God, for the
sake of your own reputation."

20-21 I was praying and confessing the sins that I and my fellow Israelites had committed.
I was pleading with Yahweh my God on behalf of Jerusalem, the place where he was present in
a special way in his temple on Mount Zion. While I was still praying, Gabriel, the angel whom
I had seen in my previous vision, came flying rapidly to me. He came at the time in the

evening when the priests offered a sacrifice each day. **22** By speaking with me, he enabled me to understand **what Yahweh had told Jeremiah about Jerusalem**. He told me, "Daniel, I have come to enable you to understand. **23** When you first started to plead with Yahweh, he gave me a message for you. He loves you very much, so he sent me to you with this message. So please understand what I tell you and understand why I have appeared to you.

24 Yahweh has determined that there will be seventy sets of seven time periods for you Israelites and for the holy city **of Jerusalem**. He will stop you from rebelling against him and keep you from committing more sins. He will forgive the wrong things you have done, and he will enable you always to do what is right. He will make the things happen that he showed to his prophets in visions. He will make his temple a sacred place again.

25 I want you to understand this well. A king will command people to rebuild Jerusalem. When they rebuild it, it will have a large public plaza, and it will have a ditch around it to protect it. It will be a dangerous time. After that, there will be seven sets of seven time periods and then sixty-two more sets of seven time periods. Then a leader will come whom God will have chosen. **26** But after those sixty-two sets of seven time periods, he will die, so he will no longer be the ruler. Instead, another ruler will come, and his army will destroy the city **of Jerusalem** and the temple. It will be as if a flood has destroyed it. There will be war continually. Yahweh has determined that armies will destroy many things. **27** That ruler will make an agreement with many people that he will firmly promise to keep for seven time periods. But halfway through that time, he will stop Yahweh's priests from offering sacrifices to him. He will put something disgusting in the temple that makes it unclean. It will be there until Yahweh finally punishes the ruler who made the temple unclean. That is what Yahweh has determined to do."

10

1 During the third year that Cyrus was the king of Persia, God revealed a message to Daniel. (The Babylonians had given him the name Belteshazzar.) The message was about a terrible war that was certainly going to happen. The message came in a vision, and Daniel understood what it meant.

2 At that time, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three weeks. **3** Throughout those three weeks, I did not eat any tasty food. I did not eat any meat or drink any wine. I did not put olive oil on my face or hair.

4 Then, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month of the year, I was standing on the bank of the great Tigris River. **5** I looked up, and I saw a man who was wearing linen clothes and a fine gold belt. **6** His body shone like a jewel. His face was as bright as a flash of lightning. His eyes were like flaming torches. His arms and legs shone like polished bronze. His voice was very loud, like the roar of a huge crowd.

7 I, Daniel, was the only one who saw this vision. There were some men with me, but they did not see it. However, they became very afraid, and they ran away and hid. **8** So I remained there by myself, looking at this great vision. I felt very weak. My face became pale because I was so weak. **9** Then I heard the man speak. When I heard him, I fainted and fell to the ground. I lay there with my face on the ground.

10 But then he took hold of me and lifted me up so that I was on my hands and knees. I was shaking. **11** The man told me, "Daniel, God loves you very much. God has sent me to you, so stand up. I am going to tell you a message, and I want you to understand it." When he said that to me, I stood up, but I was still shaking.

12 Then he told me, "Daniel, you determined to ask God humbly to show you **what would happen to your people in the future**. God has heard what you have been praying since then. I have come because of what you have prayed. So do not be afraid! **13** For 21 days, the evil spirit that influences the kingdom of Persia kept me from coming to you. But Michael, one of God's chief angels, came and helped me. Otherwise, I would not have been able to get past that evil spirit that influences the Persian rulers. **14** I have come to enable you to understand what will happen to your people when the world is about to end. Now this will happen sometime in the future."

15 While he was saying these things to me, I was looking at the ground, and I was not saying anything. **16** But then this person who looked like a human being touched my lips. Then I was able to speak. I said to him, "Sir, because I am seeing this vision, I am very upset, and I have become very weak. **17** I am not able to speak with you, sir. I feel very weak right now, and it is difficult for me to breathe."

18 But then this person who looked like a human being took hold of me again, and that made me feel stronger. **19** He told me, "Do not be afraid, you mortal. God loves you very

much. Be peaceful, and be very strong." When he said that to me, I did feel stronger. I said, "Sir, you have helped me feel stronger. So please do give me your message."

20-21 Then he said, "Remember what I told you about why I have come to you. There is a book that reveals God's truth, and I have come to tell you what it says. After that, I must return to fight against the evil spirit that influences the kingdom of Persia. After I have defeated him, the evil spirit that influences Javan will come. Michael, the angel who protects you Israelite people, is the only one who can help me defeat these spirits.

11 **1** I myself helped and protected Michael during the first year that Darius the Mede was king.

2 And now I will tell you what will surely happen in the future. Pay attention. Three more kings will rule Persia, and then there will be a fourth king who will be much richer than the others. Because he will be so rich, he will be able to assemble a great army from throughout his empire to attack the kingdom of Javan.

3 Then there will be a king who is very powerful. He will reign over a very large empire. He will do whatever he wants to do. **4** But while he is still powerful, he will die. His kingdom will break up into four parts. Men who are not his descendants will rule those parts. They will not be as powerful as he was as a king. That is because his empire will be like a plant that someone has pulled out of the ground. Other people will rule its parts. **5** The king who rules the southern part will become very powerful. But one of the military commanders of the great king who died will become more powerful than him. He will become a king, and he will rule a large empire **in the north**. **6** After many years, the southern king and the northern king will become allies. To make a peace treaty, the southern king will allow the northern king to marry his daughter. But she will not be the queen for very long. Her husband, the northern king, will not continue to rule. People will kill her, her child, her husband, and the officials who brought her from the southern kingdom.

7 But then a member of her family will become the next southern king. He will lead his army to attack the northern army, and he will defeat them when they fight. He will conquer the capital city of the northern kingdom. **8** He will also take away the idols that represent their gods and their gold and silver treasures. He will bring them back to Egypt with him. For the

next several years he will not attack the northern king. **9** Then the northern king will invade the southern kingdom. But he will lose the battle and have to retreat to his own kingdom. **10** But his sons who rule after him will prepare to attack the southern kingdom again. They will gather a very large army. As that army marches south, it will cover the land like a huge flood. **After some fighting, there will be a truce, but then** the northern army will attack again. It will conquer a city that has strong walls around it.

11 This will make the southern king very angry. He will lead his army to fight against the northern king. The northern king will gather a great army, but the southern king will defeat that great army. **12** When his soldiers destroy the northern army, they will kill tens of thousands of its soldiers. This will make the southern king very proud. But his army will not continue to win battles. **13** Instead, the northern king will prepare to fight again. He will gather an even bigger army than the one that he had before. After several years, he will invade the southern kingdom with a large army that has much military equipment.

14 When that happens, many people will rebel against the southern king. Some violent men among the Israelites will revolt against him, but he will defeat them. However, this will help make happen the things I am showing you. **15** Then the northern king will invade the southern kingdom. His soldiers will attack a city that has strong walls around it. They will capture it by piling up dirt against its walls. The northern army will be so strong that the southern army will not be able to defend that city, even with its best troops. **16** The northern king who is attacking will succeed in his plans. The southern king will not be able to oppose him. His army will occupy the beautiful land of Israel, and he will have the power to destroy it. **17** Then the northern king will determine to invade the southern kingdom with as strong an army as he can form from his kingdom. He will bring a peace treaty and make the southern king agree to it. He will allow the southern king to marry his daughter, but he will want his daughter to work for him against her husband. But this plan will not succeed, so it will not help him. **18** The northern king will then attack the regions by the sea, and he will conquer many of them. This will shame the rulers that controlled those regions. But a military commander from another kingdom will defeat him. That will shame the northern king instead. **19** The northern king will have to return to the strong forts in his own land. But he will die there, and that will be the end of him.

20 The king who rules after him will send one of his officials to collect tribute from **Judea,** the most glorious part of his kingdom. But after a few years, that king will die. He will not die in battle or because people rebel angrily against him**; instead, someone will murder him**.

21 The king who rules after him will be an evil man. He will not deserve to become king**, since he will not be the son of the previous king**. He will come when people do not expect it, and he will become king by making secret plots. **22** Great armies will oppose him, but he will defeat them and destroy them. He will also remove God's high priest. **23** The rulers of other nations will make treaties with him, but he will betray them. He will begin with a small army, but he will become very powerful. **24** When people are not expecting it, he will capture the most fertile regions in the southern kingdom. The kings who ruled the northern kingdom before him had not been able to do that, but he will do it. He will reward his troops and supporters with valuable possessions that he takes from those regions. He will make plans to capture the cities in the southern kingdom that have walls around them. But he will pursue those plans only for a short time.

25 The northern king will feel strong and confident, and he will gather a large army to attack the southern king. The southern king will gather a very large army so that he can fight against him. But he will lose the battle because some of his officials will betray him. **26** Some of his own royal officials will help destroy him. The northern king will defeat his army, and many of his soldiers will die. **27** Then the northern king and the southern king will meet together to make a peace treaty. But each one will be trying to trick the other, so they will lie to each other. However, neither one will get what he wants, because God has decided what will ultimately happen. **28** The northern king will then return to his own land. He will take away many valuable things that his army has captured. He will be hostile to the Jewish people, and he will harm them on his way back to his land.

29 At the time that God has determined, the northern king will invade the southern kingdom again. But this time he will not be successful as he was before. **30** An army will sail across the sea to oppose him. This will terrify hm, and he will have to retreat. This will make him very angry, and so he will harm the Jewish people again as he retreats. He will favor those Jews who no longer obey the agreement between Yahweh and the Israelites. **31** The northern king will send his army to make the temple ritually unclean. They will prevent the priests from

offering the regular sacrifices to Yahweh each morning and evening. They will put something disgusting in the temple that makes it unclean.

32 Some Jews will be wickedly disobeying the agreement with Yahweh. The northern king will deceive them so that they become loyal to him. But other Jews will still be loyal to Yahweh, their God. They will firmly oppose him. **33** Some wise Jewish leaders will help other Jews recognize that they should resist the northern king. But for a short time, the northern king's soldiers will be able to kill them with their swords or by burning them. They soldiers will take some of them as prisoners, and they will steal their possessions.

34 While the Jews who are loyal to Yahweh are suffering in this way, some people will help them a little bit. However, some of them will not help them sincerely. **35** Some of those wise leaders will die. But as a result, other Jews will live in a way that honors Yahweh even more. These things must happen at the time when God has determined, so this suffering will continue until God ends it.

36 This northern king will do whatever he wants to do. He will boast and say that he is greater than any god. He will even say bad things about **Yahweh,** the one true God. He will succeed until God has finished punishing his people for their sins. That is because God will do what he has announced. **37** This northern king will no longer worship the gods that his ancestors worshiped. He will also not worship the god that many women adore. Because he will think that he is greater than any god, he will not worship those gods. **38** Instead, he will honor a god that he thinks will help him win wars. His ancestors did not worship that god, but he honors it with gifts of gold, silver, jewels and other expensive items. **39** He will ask that foreign god to help him conquer strong fortresses. He will greatly honor those who obey him as their king. He will make them rule over many people, and to reward them, he will give them property.

40 When all of these events I am describing are about to end, the southern king will attack the northern king. The northern king will fight back against him furiously. His soldiers will be driving chariots and riding horses and traveling in a fleet of ships. His army will invade many countries. It will spread all over those countries like a flood. **41** The northern king will invade the beautiful land of Israel. His soldiers will kill many people. But the Edomites, Moabites, and most of the Ammonites will survive his attack. **42** The northern king will invade many

countries. He will even defeat the kingdom of Egypt. **43** The northern king will become the owner of gold and silver treasures and other valuable items that belonged to the Egyptians. The Libyans and Cushites will obey him as their king. **44** But he will become very frightened when he hears reports about what is happening in the east and in the north. He will become very angry, and he will lead his army to defeat his enemies and destroy them completely. **45** The northern king will set up his royal tents in the area between the sea and the mountain **in Jerusalem** where Yahweh's holy temple is. But that is where he will die. No one will be able to help him **so that he does not die**.

12 **1** When those things happen, the great angel Michael, who protects the Israelites, will help them. The Israelites will have more trouble than they have had since they became a nation until now. But at that time, God will rescue every one of his people whose name he has written in his book. **2** Many people who have died and who are in graves in the ground will become alive again. Some of them will live eternally with God, but God will condemn others forever. **3** Those who have done what is wise will shine as brightly as the sky. And those who have helped others to live right will shine like stars forever. **4** But as for you, Daniel, do not tell anyone what I have told you. You may write this down, but seal the scroll so that no one opens it and reads it until it is time for these things to start happening. People will go to different places trying to find out what is going to happen."

5 **When that angel finished speaking,** I, Daniel, looked up, and I saw two other angels. One angel was standing on my side of the river, and the other angel was standing on the opposite side. **6** One of them called to the angel who had been speaking to me, who was wearing linen clothes. He was above the river. That other angel asked him, "How long will it be until these amazing events end?"

7 The angel wearing linen clothes who was above the river raised both of his hands toward the sky. I heard him solemnly swear by God, who lives forever, that it would be for a time, times, and half a time. For a while, God's holy people will lose their power. But when that time is over, these other events will also end.

8 I heard what he said, but I did not understand it. So I asked, "Sir, what will be the result of all these events?"

9 He replied, “Daniel, no one will be able to understand what this message means until the time of these events. So just continue to live your life now. **10** Many people will make sure that they live in a way that honors Yahweh greatly. But wicked people will continue to do wicked things. None of them will understand what is happening, but wise people will understand. **11** There will be 1,290 days after the northern king prevents the priests from offering the regular sacrifices to Yahweh each morning and evening and puts something disgusting in the temple that makes it unclean. **12** God will greatly bless those who remain loyal to him until 1,335 days are over.

13 But as for you, Daniel, you will die before these things happen. But when the world ends, you will live again, and God will reward you. So for now, just continue to live the rest of your life.”

Hosea

1 **1** Yahweh gave this message to Hosea son of Beeri during the time when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and when Jeroboam son of Joash was king of Israel.

2 When Yahweh first spoke through Hosea, Yahweh said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute. **Some of** her children will result from her sexual relations with other men. Do this to show how the people of this land have been very unfaithful to me, as though they were an unfaithful wife who has abandoned her husband in favor of other men."

3 So Hosea married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son for him. **4** Yahweh said to Hosea, "Name him Jezreel, because very soon I will punish the descendants of Jehu for all of the people that he slaughtered at the town of Jezreel. I will end the nation of Israel. **5** At that time, I will destroy the army of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."

6 Gomer became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter. Yahweh said to Hosea, "Name her Lo Ruhamah, because I will no longer pity the people of Israel. Instead, I will certainly remove them **from their land**. **7** However, I will pity the people of Judah, and I, Yahweh their God, will rescue them. I will do it myself; I will not save them by using their bows, swords, warfare, horses, or horsemen."

8 After Gomer had weaned Lo Ruhamah, she became pregnant **again** and gave birth to **another** son. **9** Yahweh said, "Name him Lo Ammi, because you **people of Israel** are no longer my people, and I am no longer your God."

10 Yet someday the people of Israel will become a people group that is vast in number. In the very place where God said to them, "You are not my people," he will call them, "sons **and daughters** of the living God." **11** Then the people of Judah and the people of Israel will unite together and choose one leader for all of them. It will be a marvelous time when Jezreel

happens, that is, when God brings his people back to their own land as though sowing them there as seeds, and they will prosper there.

2 **1** **Yahweh also said**, “At that time, you will say to your fellow Israelite men, ‘Ammi, you are God’s people,’

and **you will say** to your fellow Israelite women, ‘Ruhamah, you are ones whom God loves.’”

2 Children, dispute earnestly with your mother,

because she is no longer my wife,

and I am no longer her husband.

Tell her to stop her sexually immoral behavior

and to stop being unfaithful to me.

3 Otherwise, I will strip her as naked

as on the day she was born.

I will make her as bare as a wilderness. I will cause her to become as dry as a desert,

and I will let her die of thirst.

4 I will not pity her children,

because they are as unfaithful as their prostitute mother.

5 I say this because she has been unfaithful to me

and has acted shamefully.

Indeed, she said, “I will run to the ones who love me;

they are the ones who give me my food and water,

my wool and linen,

my olive oil and my **wine to** drink.”

6 So **I am about to do things that will be as though** I am blocking her road with thorn-bushes

and building a wall in her way

so that she does not know what to do.

7 She will repeatedly seek the ones that **she thinks** love her,

but she will not find them.

Then she will think, “Perhaps I should return to my actual husband,
because I was better off then than I am now.”
8 None of them understand that I, **Yahweh,** am the one who gave them
their grain, wine, and olive oil;
I am the one who gave them abundant silver and gold,
which they used to make images for Baal.
9 Therefore, I will come back and take my grain from them when it is ripe
and the juice of my grapes in their season.
I will take from them the wool and linen
that I gave to them to cover their bodies.
10 Now I will expose how shameful they have been
in front of those **gods** that they think love them.
No one will be able to rescue them when I punish them.
11 I will stop all of their celebrations:
their yearly feasts, their new moon festivals, their Sabbath days,
and all of their **other** regular festivals.
12 I will destroy all their grapevines and fig trees,
which they said were payments to them
from those **gods** who loved them.
I will turn those productive plants into a wild thicket,
and wild animals will eat the fruit **that remains**.
13 I will punish them for all the times that they burned incense to honor the various Baals.
They decorated themselves with rings and other jewelry
and went to worship those **false gods** that they thought loved them,
but they forgot about me!
—this is what Yahweh declares.
14 However, listen! I am working to persuade my people to worship me again;
I will make them experience **what their ancestors did in** the wilderness
and I will speak tenderly to them.
15 I will give their vineyards back to them from that **starting** point,

and I will cause the Valley of Achor, instead of a place of trouble, to become a
place where they will confidently expect me to do good things for them.
They will respond to me there willingly as they did long ago,
when I freed them from being slaves in Egypt.
16 At that time—this is what Yahweh declares—they will call me 'My Husband.'
They will not call me 'My Baal' anymore.
17 I will not allow them to speak the names of the Baals,
and they will never use those names again.
18 At that time I will make an agreement for them
with the wild animals, the birds,
and the creatures that crawl on the ground.
I will also remove weapons of war such as bows and swords from the land.
The result will be that my people will be able to live safely and peacefully.
19 They will belong to me forever as though we are married.
I will do what is right and fair toward them,
and I will faithfully love them and act mercifully toward them.
20 I will be faithful to them,
and they will truly know me, Yahweh.
21 At that time, when they ask for what they need,
I will respond—this is what Yahweh declares—
I will tell the heavens to send rain,
and on their part, the heavens will water the earth.
22 Then the earth will produce grain, new wine, and olive oil,
and those things will provide for my people, Jezreel.
23 I will establish them in the land as my own.
I will pity Lo Ruhama,
and I will say to those whom I called Lo Ammi, "You are my people,"
and they, yes, they will say to me, "You are our God."

3 1 Then Yahweh said to me, "Go and show to your wife that you still love her, even
though she has been committing adultery with another man who is her lover. That will show

that I still love the people of Israel, even though they worship other gods and love to eat raisin cakes **in feasts that honor those gods**." **2** So I bought her back for myself for 15 pieces of silver and 335 liters of barley. **3** Then I said to her, "You will live **here** with me for a long time. During that time, you must not be a prostitute, and you must not have sex with any man, and I will do the same concerning you." **4** This will show that **in a similar way,** the Israelites will live for a long time without a king, without leaders, without sacrifices, without sacred stone pillars, without a sacred vest for a priest, and **without** household idols. **5** But later, the people of Israel will again worship Yahweh their God and want to obey him and their king who is a descendant of King David. In that future time, they will revere Yahweh and marvel at how he has blessed them.

4

1 You Israelite people, listen to what Yahweh says!
Listen, because he is bringing charges against you people who live in this land,
as follows:
no one is honest,
no one acts faithfully as they promised in the covenant,
and no one knows God in this land.
2 Instead, people curse and lie and murder and steal and commit adultery.
This is happening everywhere! People are killing other people continually!
3 Because of all these things, the land dries up,
and everyone who lives in it wastes away,
along with the wild animals and the birds in the sky.
Even the fish in the sea are diminishing.
4 Certainly there is no one who can dispute **these charges**,
and there is no one who can say that I am wrong.
But you are like people who argue with a priest **when he corrects you**!
5 Bad things will happen to you during the day,
and also at night, and to your prophets, as well.
I am going to destroy the nation of Israel, which is like a mother to you.
6 I will destroy my people because they have refused to know me,
and because, on their part, they have refused to know me,

I will no longer allow them to be my kingdom of priests.
The nation of Israel has rejected the laws of their God;
therefore, for my part, also I will reject her people.
7 The more the people increased in number, the more they sinned against me.
So instead of honoring them, I will make people despise them.
8 The priests feed on the sin offerings that my people bring,
and each one craves for my people to sin even more.
9 I will punish the priests along with the other people.
I will punish them for how they have behaved;
yes, I will pay them back for what they have done.
10 They will eat, but they will still go hungry.
They act like prostitutes, but they will not have more children,
because they have abandoned obeying Yahweh.
11 Having sex with prostitutes, drinking wine and new wine,
all make people unable to think clearly.

12 My people ask their wooden idols to guide them,
and they think that a wooden stick will answer them.
They do this because they have strongly desired to be unfaithful sexually and so they are also unfaithful spiritually,
and because they are unfaithful in these ways, their God no longer directs or protects them.
13 They burn sacrifices and incense on the mountaintops, on the hills,
and under oak trees, poplar trees, and terebinth trees,
because the shade there is pleasant.
That is why your daughters have become prostitutes
and your daughters-in-law have been unfaithful to your sons.

14 I will not punish your daughters for being prostitutes
or your daughters-in-law for being unfaithful to their husbands,
because the men themselves go off to be with prostitutes
and offer sacrifices with the prostitutes who serve at the idol shrines.

The people as a whole does not understand what is right, and so Yahweh will
destroy them.

15 Even though you people of Israel are being unfaithful to Yahweh by worshiping
idols,
you should not cause the people of Judah to sin also.
Warn them, "Do not go to Gilgal or go up to Beth Aven
to worship idols there.
Do not swear oaths there, saying, 'I swear by the life of Yahweh that I will do
what I am promising.'"
16 I say this because the Israelite people behave as stubbornly as a young cow that
refuses to obey.
So Yahweh certainly will not allow them to freely graze like a gentle lamb in
a broad meadow.
17 No, the people of Ephraim have chosen to worship idols.
We can only leave them alone.
18 They have drunk all that there was to drink;
they have fully prostituted themselves.
Their leaders have absolutely loved shameful things.
19 They will go into exile as though a powerful wind has swept them away,
and all of their sacrifices to idols will only make them ashamed.

5 1 You priests, listen to this!
You people of Israel, pay attention!
You members of the royal court, listen carefully,
because I am going to judge you.
because you have enticed the people to sin at Mizpah,
and you have made them sin at Mount Tabor.
2 Those who have rebelled against me have killed many people,
so I will punish all of them.
3 I myself know all about you, people of Ephraim;
I can see everything that the people of Israel do.

Indeed, people of Ephraim, you have now been unfaithful to me by worshiping idols,

yes, the people of Israel have made themselves unacceptable to me.

4 They prefer to do evil things,

so they refuse to worship their God any more.

They do this because a strong desire to be physically and spiritually unfaithful is working among them,

and they do not know Yahweh.

5 The way that the people of Israel are so proud makes this clear to everyone.

The people of Israel and Ephraim will fail because of how much they have sinned,

and the people of Judah will fail with them.

6 They will bring their flocks and herds

and try to appease Yahweh by making sacrifices to him,

but he will not receive them

because he has removed himself from them.

7 Those nations have been like an unfaithful wife to Yahweh

because their people are like illegitimate children; they do not belong to Yahweh.

So now, when they bring their sacrifices to the New Moon Festival,

Yahweh will kill them

as they kill the animals that they bring to sacrifice.

8 Blow a horn in Gibeah;

blow a trumpet in Ramah!

Sound the alarm at Beth Aven!

The troops will follow behind you, Benjamin!

9 The people of Ephraim will become desolate

when I punish them.

I have declared to the tribes of Israel

what will certainly happen.

10 The leaders of Judah act like people who steal land by moving boundary markers.

Therefore, I will punish them abundantly.

11 I will cause the people of Ephraim to suffer greatly when I judge them
because they were determined to worship worthless idols.

12 So I will destroy the people of Ephraim, just as moths eat through wool clothing.
I will destroy the people of Judah, just as rot eats through wood.

13 Then the leaders of Ephraim realized that their nation was weak
and the leaders of Judah realized that their people were suffering.
Then the leaders of Ephraim sent messengers to the king of Assyria, asking for his help.
But that king cannot help Ephraim
or take away the suffering of Judah.

14 This is because I will be like a lion to the people of Ephraim;
I will be like a young lion to the people of Judah.
I will be the one who will cause soldiers to kill many of them, and I will stop caring for them.
I will cause soldiers to take them away,
and no one will rescue them.

15 Then I will leave them to themselves,
until they admit that they have sinned and that they need me to forgive them.
When they are greatly suffering,
then they will sincerely ask me to help them.

6 **1** They will say to each other, "Come, let us start obeying Yahweh again!
Although he is the one who has hurt us, he will heal us;
he has wounded us, but he will bandage our wounds.

2 In a very short time he will make us strong again;
in just a few days he will restore us
so that we may live in his presence.

3 We need to know Yahweh; let us try hard to do that.
He will certainly help us, as surely as the dawn comes every morning.
He will restore us again like the rain,

as the spring rain restores the land."

4 **Yahweh says,** "You people of Ephraim and you people of Judah,

I do not know what more I can do with you!

You say that you will faithfully love me, but you love me about as long as the mist stays in the morning;

you love me about as long as the dew stays that is gone early in the day.

5 That is why I sent my prophets **to tell you** to reform yourselves;

the messages that I told them to speak **warned you that soldiers** were coming to kill you.

What I have justly decided to do will happen as **surely as** the sun will shine.

6 I do all of this because I want you to faithfully love me rather than to offer me sacrifices;

I want you to truly know me rather than to give me burnt offerings.

7 However, on their part, they broke my covenant, just as Adam did;

in that way they were unfaithful to me.

8 Gilead is a city full of people who do wicked things.

People murder others there so often, it is as though their footprints leave trails of blood everywhere.

9 The priests are like bandits who lie in wait to ambush a man;

they join together to murder people on the road to Shechem.

Indeed, they have done terrible and shameful things.

10 Among the people of Israel I have seen something horrible:

the people of Ephraim **stopped worshiping me and** became prostitutes.

Yes, the people of Israel made themselves unacceptable to me **by sinning**.

11 People of Judah, I have also appointed a time when I will judge you.

Whenever I consider enabling my people to prosper again,

7 **1** whenever I want to restore the people of Israel,

I see how sinfully the people of Ephraim act

and all of the evil things that the people of the city of Samaria do.

Indeed, they constantly deceive others,

thieves break into houses, and gangs of robbers steal from people in the streets.

2 They never stop to think that I remember every evil thing that they do.
It is as though they have piled up their sins all around them;
it is as though those sins are always right in front of me.

3 The people of Israel please their king by doing evil things,
and they please the royal officials by telling lies.

4 All the people are **unfaithful to me like** an adulterous spouse.
They are **so intent on doing evil things that they are** like a burning oven that a baker has heated;
it is so hot that the baker does not need to stir the fire
from when he starts to knead the dough until he adds leavening to it.

5 On the day that they celebrate the king's festival,
the officials made him drunk with wine until he became sick.
Then the king joined in with those who mock me.

6 Indeed, the officials strongly desire to murder **the king**, as though their hearts were as hot as an oven.
They remain angry through the night, like an oven that the baker neglects while he sleeps;
but then in the morning it blazes up like a roaring fire.

7 All of those conspirators are **so passionate to be important that they are** like hot ovens,
and they destroy their rulers.
All of their kings die violently;
yet not one of them calls out to me **to help him**.

8 The leaders of Ephraim make alliances with foreign nations,
so Ephraim has become **ruined, like** a pancake that someone has failed to turn over.

9 Foreigners have drained away their resources, yet the people of Israel do not realize it.
Their nation is becoming powerless, like a man who is growing old and weak,

yet they do not realize it.

10 The way that the people of Israel are so proud makes this clear to everyone.
Yet they have not begun again to worship Yahweh their God,
and they have not tried to know me despite all of these things **that have happened**.

11 The leaders of Ephraim are like a dove, foolish and stupid.
They asked the leaders of Egypt **to help them**;
then they asked the leaders of Assyria **to help them**.

12 Whenever they go **to seek help**, I will not allow them to succeed.
I will be like a hunter who catches birds with a net and pulls them down from the sky.
I will punish them,
just as I warned their assembly that I would do.

13 Terrible things will happen to them because they have stopped obeying me!
I will destroy them because they have rebelled against me!
For my part, I wanted to rescue them,
but for their part, they **just** tell lies about me.

14 They do not sincerely cry out to me **to help them**; instead they just lie on their beds and wail.
They slash themselves **to offer their blood to pagan gods**, hoping to get grain and new wine,
but they reject me.

15 As for me, I trained them and made them strong,
but now they plan to do evil things to me.

16 They ask for help, but not from me, the Most High God;
they are as unreliable as a bow that does not shoot straight.
Their officials will die in battle
because what they have said has made me very angry.
The people of Egypt will laugh at them for this."

8 **1** **Yahweh said to me,** "Blow a trumpet **to warn the people**!
My people have rejected the agreement that I made with them,

and they have rebelled against obeying my laws.

Therefore, an enemy is ready to invade the land where my people live, as a vulture watches its prey.

2 The Israelites cry out to me,

'Our God, we people of Israel know you!'

3 But the people of Israel have rejected what is good,

so an enemy will chase after them.

4 As for them, they set up kings without asking me,

and they chose leaders, but I did not approve them.

They used their silver and gold to make idols for themselves,

and that is why I will destroy them."

5 "I reject your calf idol, you people of Samaria!

I am very angry with you.

You need to stop acting in ways that make you guilty!

6 And it was in Israel that a craftsman made that idol!

It is not God!

I will make sure that someone smashes that calf idol of Samaria into pieces.

7 What the people of Israel have done is completely foolish, like trying to plant wind.

What they get in return will be terrible, like reaping a whirlwind.

Their plans will produce nothing good,

like grain stalks that have no heads and that can produce no flour.

Even if they did produce something,

foreigners would come and steal it all.

8 The other nations have already stolen Israel.

Even now the Israelites live as one of the other nations,

and there is nothing special about them at all.

9 Indeed, the Israelites have gone to Assyria

like a lonely wild donkey **looking for a mate**.

The people of Ephraim have paid other nations to be their allies.

10 But although they pay other nations **to help them**,

I will now begin to punish them.
They will soon suffer greatly
because of everything that the great king will demand from them.
11 Because the people of Ephraim built many altars **on which to make sacrifices** to **take away** sin,
those altars became places where they sinned **even more**.
12 Even if I wrote down my law for them ten thousand times,
they would still consider that it did not apply to them.
13 They offer sacrifices to me
and eat **some of** the meat from those sacrifices,
but I, Yahweh, am not pleased with those people.
I remember the wrong things that they have done
and now I will punish them because they have sinned.
As for them, they will become **slaves** again **like they were** in Egypt.
14 The people of Israel have forgotten God, the one who created their nation,
and they have built palaces **for themselves instead**.
The people of Judah have built many cities with strong walls to protect them,
but I will send fire to burn down their cities
and it will completely consume their strong towers."

9 **1** You people of Israel, do not celebrate
joyfully the way other peoples do!
I say this because you have been unfaithful to your God.
You have loved the **gifts that you thought were** payments from your idols
at every threshing floor where people thresh grain.
2 **Soon** the people will not have enough grain or wine,
and the new wine will be gone.
3 The people of Israel will not continue to live in the land that belongs to Yahweh.
Instead, the people of Ephraim will go back to **being slaves as they were in** Egypt,
and in Assyria they will eat food that God has forbidden them to eat.

4 They will not pour out wine offerings to Yahweh,
and their sacrifices will not please him.
Their sacrifices will be like the food that is in the house with a dead body;
everyone who eats that food will be unacceptable to God,
because they will eat that food only for themselves;
they will not bring it into Yahweh's temple.
5 You will not be able to celebrate the feasts that Yahweh appointed
or the festivals that honor Yahweh.
6 Look! Even if some of them escape when the Assyrians destroy their towns,
people in Egypt will capture them,
and people in **the Egyptian capital city of** Memphis will bury them.
Weeds will grow over the silver objects that they treasure,
and thorns will fill their tents.
7 Now is the time for God to punish the Israelites;
now is the time for him to do to them as they deserve.
When he does, the people of Israel will know it!
You say that the prophet is a fool
and **that** the one whom the Spirit inspires is insane,
but that is only because you have sinned so much
and because you are very hostile **toward God**.
8 Prophets watch over the people of Ephraim because my God told them to do so,
but people set traps for them everywhere they go.
People are hostile to them, even in the temple of their God.
9 The people have become very grievously sinful,
just as the people of Gibeah were **long ago**.
God will not forget how wickedly they have acted;
he will punish **them for** their sins.
10 **Yahweh says,** "When I chose Israel,
I was **as pleased with them** as someone who finds grapes in a desert.
When I first looked at your ancestors,
they were **as delightful** as the very first figs that grow on a young fig tree.

But then they started worshiping the Baal of Peor.
They gave themselves completely to that disgusting idol,
and they became as disgusting as the idol that they loved.
11 What the people of Ephraim are most proud of will quickly disappear.
No one will conceive, carry, or give birth to children.
12 Even if they do raise children,
I will take away every one of them so that none survive.
Yes, indeed, it will be terrible for them
when I abandon them!
13 I have decreed for Ephraim just as I have decreed for Tyre,
that city in its beautiful place,
that the people of Ephraim will bring out their own children
for their enemies to slaughter."
14 **Hosea says,** "So Yahweh, give to these people—but what can I ask you to give them?
Give them miscarriages
and no way to nurse babies."
15 **Yahweh says,** "Because of all of the wicked things that my people have done at Gilgal,
that is where I started to hate them.
Because of all of the evil things that they do,
I will drive them out of my land.
I will not love them any longer;
all of their leaders rebel against me.
16 I have struck the people of Ephraim
so that they **are as infertile as grapevines that** have shriveled roots and cannot produce fruit.
Even if the women do give birth,
I will kill the children whom they love."
17 **Hosea says,** "The God whom I worship will reject the people of Israel
because they have not obeyed him.

Therefore, they will wander among the other nations, away from their home."

10 **1** The people of Israel are selfish, like a productive vine
that establishes its fruit for itself.
The more the people prospered,
the more altars they built to worship idols.
The more their land produced,
the more elaborate they made their pillars to idols.
2 The people of Israel deceive themselves;
now they must suffer for their sins.
Yahweh will be the one to tear down their altars
and smash their sacred pillars.
3 Indeed, soon they will say, "We have no king
because we did not honor Yahweh.
However, even if we had a king,
he could not do anything to help us."
4 The people of Israel make false promises;
they swear empty oaths and make agreements that they do not keep.
So people accuse each other to the judges
and the number of these harmful legal disputes is multiplying throughout the land like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.
5 The people who live in Samaria will be afraid
about what will happen to the calf idol of Beth Aven.
Indeed, the people who worship it will mourn over it,
and the idolatrous priests who serve that idol will cry out
about it and about how splendid it was,
because it will be splendid no more.
6 The enemy will carry the idol itself to Assyria
as a gift for its king.
The people of Ephraim will be ashamed,
yes, all of the people of Israel will feel humiliated

because what they had believed and lived by was wrong.

7 The king of Samaria will be no more.

He will go away like a chip of wood **floating away** on the surface of the water.

8 Yahweh will destroy the places on the hilltops, like Beth Aven,

where the people of Israel sin **by worshiping idols**.

Thorns and weeds will grow up and cover their altars.

Then the people will beg the mountains and hills,

"Fall down on us and cover us **to protect us from Yahweh**!"

9 Israel, you have been sinning ever since your ancestors did those terrible things at Gibeah,

and you have continued doing such things ever since then.

War will certainly overtake all of the wicked people in Gibeah.

10 **Yahweh says,** "When I decide to act, I will punish them.

I will gather armies from other nations to attack them

and capture them because of their double sin.

11 The people of Ephraim were like a young cow that someone had trained

and that was happy to walk around on the stalks of grain.

Its neck was flawless **because no one had ever put a yoke on it**.

But for my part, I will ignore its beautiful neck.

Now I will make the people of Ephraim work hard, as though they were a young cow that I was harnessing for the first time.

It will be as though the people of Judah will have to plow,

yes, it will be as though the people of Jacob will have to break up the hard ground with no one to help them.

12 Start doing what is right, as though you were planting good seeds,

and it will be as though you were harvesting the crop from those good seeds when I reward you for being faithful to me.

Do the hard work of **changing your ways as though you were** plowing new ground.

Now is when you must start to know me.

Then I will come

and abundantly bless you by doing what is right for you.

13 But instead of that, you have done what is wicked, which is like planting poisonous crops,
and it is as though you have harvested and eaten those crops because what you have done has made you lie to each other and treat each other unjustly.
You did this because you deceived yourselves,
thinking that you knew the best way to do things
and that your many soldiers would protect you.
14 But they will not; your enemies will attack you,
and they will destroy all of your strong cities,
just as Shalman destroyed the city of Beth Arbel,
when his soldiers bashed mothers to death on top of their children.
15 I will do the same thing to you, people of Bethel,
because you are extremely wicked.
When the battle begins at dawn,
the enemy will completely destroy the king of Israel.

11 1 When the Israelite people were young as a nation, I loved them as a father loves a son,
and I brought them out of Egypt.
2 However, the more I called to the Israelites, the more they ignored me.
Those people kept offering sacrifices to the Baal gods
and burning incense to honor the statues of them.
3 The people of Ephraim were like a small child and I was like the one who taught them to walk.
It was as though I carried them in my arms,
but they did not understand that I was the one who took care of them.
4 I gently guided them, because I loved them.
I was to them like a loving father who lifts his infant to his cheek
and I bent down to feed them.
5 The Israelites will not return to being slaves in the land of Egypt,
but now the king of Assyria will rule over them,
because they refused to worship me any more.

6 Enemies will attack **the people in** their cities with swords
and will destroy the bars **of their gates**.
Their enemies will kill them because of their **evil** plans.
7 My people are determined to no longer worship me.
Though they call out to me, the Most High,
I will certainly not help them.
8 And yet, I cannot bring myself to give you up, Ephraim!
I cannot just let you go, Israel!
I cannot completely destroy you the way I destroyed the cities of Admah and Zeboiim!
I am in anguish deep within me;
I love you much too strongly **to do this**!
9 Although I am extremely angry, I will not act accordingly;
I will not destroy **the people of** Ephraim again!
I will do this because I am God, not a human being.
I am the Holy One who lives among you,
and I will not come to destroy you even though I am extremely angry."
10 **Hosea said,** "The Israelites will return to Yahweh.
He will call out with a loud, powerful voice,
and when it is he who calls out,
his people will come back, deeply respectful, from **the lands around** the sea **to the west**.
11 Others of his people will come from Egypt **as timid** as a bird,
and others will come from the land of Assyria **as docile** as a dove."
I will settle them in their own homes again. **This will happen, because** I, Yahweh, have declared it.
12 The people of Ephraim have constantly lied to me,
yes, the people of Israel are continually treacherous.
However, the people of Judah still obey God;
they remain faithful to the Holy One.

12 1 The people of Ephraim do what is useless;
yes, they keep busy all day doing worthless things.
They constantly tell lies and do violent things.
First they make a treaty with Assyria,
and then they send olive oil to Egypt to get help from that nation.
2 Yahweh is bringing a legal case against Judah as well,
and he will punish the descendants of Jacob for how they have lived.
He will give them what they deserve for the things they have done.
3 When their ancestor Jacob was still in his mother's womb, he grabbed the heel of his brother Esau because he wanted to be the firstborn.
When Jacob grew up and became strong, he wrestled with God.
4 He struggled with an angel who appeared to him, and he won.
Then Jacob wept and begged the angel to bless him.
God met Jacob at Bethel,
and there God spoke with him.
5 That one is Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies;
"Yahweh" is the name that he commanded us always to use for him.
6 So you, people of Israel, restore yourselves as God's people by obeying your God!
Be faithful to him and act justly toward others,
and always trust in your God.

7 But the merchants among you use dishonest scales;
they love to cheat people.
8 The people of Ephraim boast and say,
"We have become very rich!
We have gained great possessions for ourselves.
No one can find anything wrong in all the work we have done, that is,
nothing that would count as sin for us."

9 "I am Yahweh your God, the one who brought your ancestors out of Egypt.
I will make you live in tents again,

just as your people did when they celebrated the Celebration of Shelters.

10 I told the prophets what to say **to the people**,
and I am the one who showed them many times what I am going to do.
I used the prophets to teach **my people** through stories and examples."

11 The people of Gilead are certainly wicked;
they are now completely worthless.
The people sacrifice bulls at Gilgal,
but enemies will tear down their altars
and leave them looking like piles of stones in a plowed field.

12 Your ancestor Jacob ran away to the land of Aram **to escape from his brother Esau**.
There he, Israel, worked **as a shepherd to pay** for a wife,
and he kept on tending **sheep to pay** for a wife.

13 **Later** Yahweh used the prophet **Moses** to bring the Israelites out of Egypt,
and through that prophet, Yahweh took care of them.

14 But the people of Ephraim have made their Lord extremely angry.
Their Lord will hold them responsible for all of the people whom they have killed,
and he will give them what they deserve for all of the ways that they have offended him.

13

1 **In the past,** when **the leaders of** Ephraim spoke,
many people became afraid.
The leaders of Israel became arrogant.
Then they caused the people to sin by worshiping Baal,
and so they must die.

2 Now they keep on sinning more and more;
they use their silver to make metal idols for themselves.
They cleverly design the statues,
but all of them are only the work of human craftsmen.
The people who worship these idols talk to them.

They sacrifice human beings to them, and they kiss these calf-idols!

3 Because of these things, those people will **quickly** disappear
like clouds that form in the morning **and then vanish**,
like dew that the sun dries up early in the day,
like chaff that the wind blows away from the threshing floor,
like smoke that drifts out through a window.

4 **Yahweh says to his people,** "Even so, I am Yahweh your God,
the one who brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt.
You should acknowledge no god except me,
and no one else can save you.

5 I was the one who cared for your ancestors
when they were in the very dry desert land.

6 When I fed them, they ate until they were full;
when they ate until they were full, they became proud.
That is why they stopped thinking about me.

7 So I will be **as fierce** toward them as a lion;
I will be like a leopard that lurks **to ambush them** beside the road.

8 I will attack them **as furiously** as a mother bear whose cubs someone has stolen;
it will be as though I will rip their chests open.
Right then and there I will completely destroy them, like a lioness devouring her prey,
like wild animals tearing their victims apart.

9 You have caused me to destroy you, people of Israel,
because you rebelled against me, your **only** helper.

10 You have a king, but it looks like he is unable to save you
in any of your cities.
Your ancestors said **to me**, 'Give us a king and officials,' **and I did so**.
But those rulers cannot help you now.

11 I become angry **when you request a king**, but I give you a king.
Later, I become angry **again**, so I take him away.

12 I have kept a record of all of the evil things that you people of Ephraim have done;

yes, I have stored up **an account of** all of your sins.

13 You people of Ephraim will suffer like a woman does when she gives birth,

but you are like a foolish baby

who refuses to come out

when it is time to be born.

14 I would have rescued you from going to the grave;

yes, I wanted to save you from dying.

But now, you must suffer as with a plague and die!

The enemy must destroy you and send you to your graves!

I cannot decide differently about this.

15 Even though the people of Ephraim have prospered more than the other tribes,

I, Yahweh, will send **enemies who will come** from the east **like** a scorching wind out of the desert.

They will destroy all of Ephraim's sources of wealth,

and they are the ones who will carry away everything valuable that the people of Ephraim own.

16 The people of Samaria are guilty and so I must punish them

because they have rebelled against me, the God whom they promised to worship.

Their enemies will kill them with swords;

they will smash their little children on the ground,

and they will cut open their pregnant women."

14

1 You people of Israel, begin again to worship and obey Yahweh your God.

You must do this because terrible things are happening to you because you have been sinning.

2 Decide what you will say, and determine that you will obey Yahweh.

Say to him, "Please forgive us for all of the wrong things that we have done,

and accept what we will do now to please you,

and please accept what we say as we promise to obey you instead of sacrifices
of animals.

3 We know that Assyria will not save us
and it will not benefit us to ride on war horses.
We will never again say, 'You are our gods'
to the idols that we have made.
You, Yahweh, are the one who acts mercifully toward orphans."

4 Yahweh says, "When they say that to me, I will forgive them for turning away
from me;
I will love them generously,
because I will no longer be angry with them.

5 I will refresh the people of Israel
just as dew refreshes the ground.
They will prosper and become beautiful
and they will become as strong and stable as the trees of Lebanon.

6 They will become widely influential;
they will be as majestic as an olive tree,
and they will be as delightful as the aroma of the cedar trees in Lebanon."

7 The people of Israel will come back and live under Yahweh's protection.
They will grow abundant grain again;
they will become as productive as a vineyard.
People will speak well of Yahweh, like they speak well of the fine wine from
Lebanon.

8 Yahweh says, "People of Ephraim, I want nothing more to do with idols!
I am the one who responds to you and watches over you.
I am the source of everything good in your life, like a tree
that always stays green and always produces fruit."

9 Anyone who is truly wise should understand these things that I have written.
Anyone who has good sense must be sure that he knows them.
Because what Yahweh tells us to do is right,
and people who do what is right will obey him,

but people who rebel against him will ruin themselves by not doing what he tells us to do.

Joel

1 **1** I am Joel son of Pethuel. This is a message that Yahweh gave to me.

2 You leaders **of Israel**, and everyone else who lives in this country, listen **to this message**!
Nothing like this has ever happened during the time that we have lived
or during the time when our ancestors lived.
3 Tell your children about it,
and tell your children to tell it to their children,
and tell your grandchildren to tell it to their children.
4 Tell them this:
The first swarm of locusts came and cut many of the leaves of the crops;
then another swarm came and ate the rest of the leaves,
then hopping locusts came and ate what they had left,
and finally, another swarm came
and they destroyed everything else.
5 You people who are drunk, wake up and cry!
Cry loudly, all of you who drink wine,
because all the grapes are ruined,
and so there will be no new wine!
6 Huge swarms of locusts have entered our country.
They are like a powerful army
that has very many soldiers;
no one can count them.
The locusts have teeth that are as sharp as the teeth of lions!
7 They have destroyed our grapevines and our fig trees
by stripping off and eating all the bark,
with the result that the branches are white and bare.

8 Cry and wail as a young woman does
when the young man to whom she was engaged has died.
9 There is no more flour or wine for us to offer as sacrifices at Yahweh's temple,
so the priests who serve Yahweh are mourning.
10 The locusts have ruined the **crops in the** fields.
It is as though the ground itself is mourning
because the grain is gone;
there will be no **grapes to make** wine,
and there is no more **olive** oil.
11 You farmers, despair!
You who take care of grapevines, cry loudly,
because the crops in the field are gone;
there is no wheat or barley growing any more.
12 The grapevines and the fig trees have withered,
and the pomegranate trees, palm trees, and apricot trees have also dried up.
The people are no longer joyful.
13 You priests, put on **rough sack** clothes and wail.
You who serve my God **by offering sacrifices** on the altar,
wear those sack clothes all night **to show that you are mourning**,
because there is no flour or wine to be offered at the temple of your God.
14 Set apart a day for when the people should go without food.
Tell the leaders and the other people to gather at the temple
and to cry out to Yahweh **there**.
15 It will soon be the time when Yahweh, **who is** the Almighty God, will punish us,
when he will cause us to experience more disasters.
That will be a terrible time!
16 Our crops are already gone,
and no **one is** rejoicing at all at the temple of our God.
17 When we plant seeds, **they do not grow;**
they dry up in the ground,
so there are no crops to harvest.

Our barns are empty;
there is no grain to store in them.
18 Our cattle groan, searching for a pasture with some grass to eat but not finding any.
The sheep also bleat because they are suffering.
19 Yahweh, I cry out to you,
because it is as though a fire has completely burned our pastures and our forests.
20 The wild animals also are desperate for you to help them,
because all the streams have dried up.
The dryness is like a fire burning up the wilderness pastures.

2 1 Blow horns on Mount Zion,
God's sacred hill in Jerusalem!
Shout to the people of Judah that they should be afraid and tremble,
because it will soon be the time for Yahweh to punish us further.
2 That will be a very dark and gloomy day;
A huge swarm of locusts forms a black cloud, making it very dark.
The swarm spreads over the mountains like the light of dawn;
they are like a mighty army.
Nothing like this has ever happened before,
and nothing like this will ever happen again.
3 It is as though the locusts set everything on fire wherever they go.
In front of them, the land was as beautiful as the garden of Eden,
but behind them the land is like a desert,
and nothing is able to withstand them.
4 The locusts resemble horses
and they run like war horses.
5 Leaping over the mountaintops,
they make a noise like rumbling chariots,
like a mighty army that is preparing for a battle,

or like the roar of a fire that burns up stubble **in a field**.

6 When people see them coming,
they become very pale and frightened.

7 The locusts run and climb over walls like soldiers do;
each one continues on its way
and never turns aside from its course.

8 They rush straight ahead
without pushing each other.
People try to fight against them,
but that does not cause them to stop.

9 They swarm over the city walls and enter our houses;
they enter through our windows as thieves do.

10 **It is as though** they cause the earth to shake and the sky to tremble as they come.
The sun and the moon become dark,
and the stars do not shine
because there are so many locusts in the sky.

11 Yahweh commands this army **of countless locusts**,
and they obey him powerfully.
This time during which Yahweh is judging and punishing us is very terrible,
with the result that it seems that no one can survive it.

12 But Yahweh says,

"In spite of these disasters that you have experienced,
you can still reconcile yourselves to me in your inner being.
Weep, and mourn, and fast **to show that you are sorry that you have abandoned me**."

13 Do not tear **only** your clothes
to show that you are sorry;
more importantly, show in your inner being that you are truly sorry
and **in that way** reconcile yourselves to Yahweh your God.
Do this because Yahweh is merciful and kind;

he does not quickly become angry;
instead, he greatly and faithfully loves us,
and he does not like to punish us.
14 It is possible that he will change his mind about punishing **you**
and, instead, act mercifully **toward you**.
If he does that, he will bless you
by giving you plenty of grain and wine
so that you can offer **some of** those things for sacrifices to our God, Yahweh.
15 Blow the **signal** horns on Mount Zion!
Gather the people together!
Set apart time to fast**, to show that you are sorry for your sins**.
16 Gather everyone together and prepare them for a special meeting for Yahweh.
Bring everyone—
the old people and the children, even the babies;
yes, even summon bridegrooms and brides from their rooms.
17 Tell the priests who serve Yahweh to cry all the way from the entrance of the temple to the altar
and to pray this:
"Yahweh, be merciful to us, your people;
do not allow people from other nations to despise us;
do not allow them to rule over us and say among themselves,
'Their God has abandoned them!'"
18 Then Yahweh showed that he cared deeply about his people
and that he would act mercifully toward them.

19 When the people prayed,

Yahweh answered and said,
"I will give you plenty of grain and wine and olive oil,
and you will be satisfied.
I will no longer allow other nations to insult you.
20 When an army from the north comes **to attack you**,

I will force them to continue past Jerusalem
into the desert.
Some will go into the Dead Sea in the east,
and some will go into the Mediterranean Sea in the west.
There they will all die, and their bodies will stink powerfully,
because they were powerful in what they did."

21 Do not be afraid, people, for what might happen to the land.

22 You can rejoice, because Yahweh will be powerful in what he does! And the wild animals should not be afraid,
because the meadows will soon become green again;
the fig trees and other trees will be full of fruit,
and the grapevines will be covered with grapes.

23 You people of Jerusalem,
rejoice about what Yahweh, your God, will do for you.
He will send rain to deliver you at the right time—
before planting and before harvesting,
as he did previously.

24 The ground where you thresh the grain will be covered with grain,
and your vats where you store the fresh grape juice and olive oil will be full.

25 Yahweh said, "I will repay you for everything that those great swarms of locusts destroyed,
that enormous army that I sent to attack you.

26 Then you will eat until your stomachs are full.
Then you will praise me, Yahweh, your God,
for the wonderful things that I have done for you,
and never again will I let others shame you, my people.

27 When that happens, you will know that I am always among you,
that I am Yahweh, your God,
and that there is no other God.
Never again will I let others shame you."

28 "Some time later, I will give my Spirit to many people.

You sons and daughters will proclaim messages that come directly from me.
Your old men will have dreams that come from me,
and your young men will have visions that come from me.
29 At that time, I will generously give my Spirit even to servants, both men and women.
30 I will do unusual things on the earth and in the sky.
On the earth, there will be much bloodshed,
and there will be very large fires and smoke that resembles huge clouds.
31 In the sky, the sun will become dark, and the moon will become **as red as** blood.
Those things will happen before that great and terrible day when I, Yahweh, come **to judge all people**.
32 And I will do this: I will save everyone who worships me.
As I have said before, 'On Mount Zion in Jerusalem I will make a way for them to escape;
those whom I have chosen will survive.'"

3 **1** Yahweh says this:

"At that time, I will bring back the people whom their enemies took away from Jerusalem and from **other places in** Judah.
2 Then in the Valley of Jehoshaphat I will gather together **the people of** all of the other nations;
there I will judge **and punish** them
because they scattered my Israelite people
and forced them to go to other countries,
and because they divided up my land **among themselves**.
3 **I will judge them** also **because** they played games of chance to determine who would get **each of** my people.
They traded **some of the** Israelite boys for prostitutes,
and they sold **some of the** Israelite girls to get **money to buy** wine, and they drank **it**.

4 You people of the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and you people of Philistia—you have no
reason to be angry with me. You are behaving as if you are trying to avenge yourselves on me
for something. If that is what you are doing, I will very quickly do the same thing to you.
5 You took the silver and gold and other valuable things from my temple and put them into
your own temples. **6** You dragged away the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, and
you took them far away from their homes and sold them to Greek traders.

7 But I will make it possible for my people to return from the places to which you sold
them, and I will do to you what you did to them. **8** Then I will cause people to take some of
your sons and your daughters and sell them to the people of Judah! And then they will sell
some of them to the Sabean people, who live far away. That will certainly happen because I,
Yahweh, have said it."

9 Proclaim to the people of all nations,
"Prepare for a war!
Summon your soldiers;
tell them to stand in their battle positions.
10 Take your plows and make swords from them;
take your pruning knives and make spears from them.
Even the weak people must also act like they are strong soldiers.
11 All of you people from the nations that are near Judah
must come quickly and gather there."
But Yahweh, when that happens, send your army of angels to attack them!
12 Yahweh says, "The people in the nations near Judah must get ready and come to
the Valley of Jehoshaphat.
There I will sit as a judge, and I will punish them.
13 They are like crops that are ready for farmers to harvest them;
so strike them as a farmer swings his sickle to cut the grain.
They are like large piles of grapes in the pits where farmers will press them;
so crush them as a farmer tramples on the grapes.
Punish them severely because they are very wicked.

If all of the wicked things that they have done became grape juice, they are so wicked that the juice would make the vats overflow."

14 There will be huge crowds of people in that Valley of Judgment.
It will soon be the time that Yahweh will punish them in that Valley of Judgment.

15 At that time there will be no light from the sun or moon,
and the stars will not shine.

16 From Mount Zion in Jerusalem, Yahweh will speak forcefully;
his voice will be like thunder,
and his voice will cause the sky and the earth to shake.
But Yahweh will protect his people;
he will be like a strong wall around the people of Israel.

17 Yahweh says, "At that time, you Israelite people will know that I am Yahweh, your God.
I live on Zion, my holy hill.
Jerusalem will be a holy city,
and soldiers from other countries will never conquer it again.

18 At that time, there will be vineyards bearing sweet grapes on the mountains,
and your cattle and goats on those hills will produce plenty of milk.
The streams in Judah will have abundant water,
and a stream will flow from my temple into the Valley of Shittim northeast of the Salt Sea.

19 The armies of Egypt and Edom attacked the people of Judah
and killed many people there who had not done anything that was wrong.
As a result, those countries will become wastelands, with no one living there any longer.

20 But there will always be people living throughout Judea

21 and in Jerusalem, forever. I, Yahweh, live on Mount Zion in Jerusalem,
and I will not punish people further for killing my people, for which I previously punished them."

Amos

1 **1** This is the message that Yahweh gave to **me,** Amos. I am a man who raises sheep, and I
am from **the village of** Tekoa. Yahweh showed me in a vision this message about Israel during
the time when Uzziah was the king of Judah and Jeroboam, the son of Jehoash, was the king of
Israel. This was two years before the **great** earthquake.

2 This is the message:

Yahweh is speaking powerfully, like the roar of a lion,
from Zion, in **the middle of** Jerusalem.
He is causing the pastures where shepherds take care of their sheep to dry up,
and **even the forests on** the top of Mount Carmel will wither.

3 This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of Damascus have sinned again and again,
so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because they cruelly attacked the people of the region of Gilead,
destroying them as people crush grain with iron-toothed threshing tools.

4 So I will send fire to **destroy that place, including** the palace that **their king** Hazael
built,
and it will burn down the fortresses where **his son, their king** Ben-Hadad, has
his armies.

5 I will smash the **gate** bars **that protect the city** of Damascus,
and I will get rid of the one who sits **on the throne** in the Valley of Aven
and the king who rules in **the region of** Beth Eden.
The people of Aram will become captives and will go to the land of Kir,"
says Yahweh.

6 This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of the city of Gaza have sinned again and again,
so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because they captured whole people groups and took them away
in order to sell them as slaves to the people of Edom.
7 So I will send fire to destroy the walls of Gaza,
and it will burn down the fortresses of that city.
8 I will get rid of the one who sits on the throne in the city of Ashdod
and the king who rules in the city of Ashkelon.
I will also powerfully punish the people of the city of Ekron,
and all the people of the region of Philistia who are still alive will die,"
says my Lord Yahweh.

9 This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of the city of Tyre have sinned again and again,
so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because they also captured whole people groups and took them away to Edom,
and they ignored the treaty that they had made with another nation.
10 So I will send fire to destroy the walls of Tyre,
and it will burn down the fortresses of that city."

11 This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of Edom have sinned again and again,
so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because they attacked the people of Israel, who descended from Esau's brother
Jacob, and killed them with swords.
They did not act mercifully toward them at all.
They were constantly wrathful to the people of Israel,
and they kept encouraging each other to stay angry with the people of Israel
always.
12 So I will send fire to destroy the region of Teman,
and it will burn down the fortresses of the city of Bozrah."

13 This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of Ammon have sinned again and again,
so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because their soldiers even ripped open the pregnant women of the region of Gilead
when they attacked it in order to enlarge their own territory.

14 So I will start a fire that will destroy the walls of the city of Rabbah,
and it will burn down the fortresses of that city.
During that battle, the enemies will shout loudly.
They will come as quickly and violently as a strong windstorm.

15 Then the king of Ammon will become a captive and will go to another country,
and his officials will go with him,"
says Yahweh.

2 **1** This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of Moab have sinned again and again,
so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because they burned the bones of the king of Edom
until only lime remained.

2 So I will send a fire to destroy the nation of Moab,
and it will burn down the fortresses of the city of Kerioth.
Many people of Moab will die while soldiers shout,
blow the ram's horn, and destroy Moab.

3 I will get rid of the ruler of Moab,
and I will kill all of Moab's leaders along with him.
That is what I, Yahweh, say."

4 This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of Judah have sinned again and again,

so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because they have rejected the instructions that I, Yahweh, gave them,
and they have not obeyed my commands.
The false gods that they worship have deceived them,
the same false gods that their ancestors chose to worship.
5 So I will send a fire to **destroy the nation of** Judah,
and it will completely burn down the fortresses of **the city of** Jerusalem."

6 This is what Yahweh says,

"The people of Israel have sinned again and again,
so I will certainly punish them and will not change my mind about it,
because they sell good people in order to get silver,
and **they sell** needy people to get a pair of sandals.
7 They oppress poor people as though they are crushing them into the dirt,
and they are unjust to people who are suffering.
A man and his father both have sexual relations with the same **servant** girl,
and so they dishonor me, the holy God.
8 They take the cloaks from poor people **as a guarantee that those people would repay what they had borrowed**. Then**, instead of returning them at the end of the day,** they lie down on them beside the altars **where they worship**.
They force people to pay fines to them, and then **use the money to** buy wine
that they drink in the temple of their God.
9 But I am the one who destroyed the Amorite people group on behalf of your ancestors,
even though those people were very tall like cedar trees
and very strong like oak trees.
I destroyed them completely.
10 I am the one who brought you Israelite people from **being slaves in** the land of Egypt,
and then I led your ancestors through the wilderness for forty years,
so that I could give you the land of the Amorite people as your own.

11 Over the years, I chose some of your young men to become prophets,
and others to be Nazirites.
You Israelite people certainly know that this is true! This is what I, Yahweh, declare.
12 But you forced the Nazirites to drink wine,
and you commanded the prophets to not tell people the messages that I, Yahweh, give to them!
13 So now I will make you unable to escape what will happen to you right where you are,
just as a cart loaded with too much grain cannot move from where it is.
14 At that time, even people who can run quickly will not be able to escape,
and even strong people will not be strong enough,
and even warriors will not be able to rescue themselves.
15 Even those who shoot arrows will not be able to stand and do so,
and even those who can run quickly will not be able to escape,
and even those who have a horse to ride will not be able to save themselves.
16 At that time, even the bravest of the mighty men
will run away naked.
This is what I, Yahweh, declare."

3 **1** You people of Israel, listen to this message that Yahweh has spoken against you. He is speaking against all of the descendants of the people whom he brought up out of the land of Egypt. He says this:

2 "From among all of the families of people on the earth,
I chose only you to belong to me.
That is why I must now punish you
for all of the ways that you have sinned."
3 Two people do not travel together
unless they have agreed to do that.
4 A lion does not roar in the forest
unless it has caught an animal to eat,

and a young lion does not growl in its den
unless it has caught something.
5 A bird does not get caught in a trap on the ground
unless someone has set a trap for it,
and a trap does not spring up to catch **an animal**
if there is nothing to catch.
6 If someone blows **an alarm** on a ram's horn in a city,
the people there become afraid,
and if something terrible happens in a city,
then Yahweh has done it.
7 In the same way, the Lord Yahweh does not do something
unless he has first revealed his plans to his servants the prophets.
8 When a lion roars,
everyone is afraid;
similarly, when the Lord Yahweh speaks,
the prophets must proclaim what he says.
9 **Yahweh says,** "Announce this to the rulers who live in the fortresses in the city of Ashdod
and to the rulers who live in the fortresses in the land of Egypt.
Say to them, 'Gather together on the hills around the city of Samaria,
and see how the people there are panicking,
and how the powerful people are oppressing the other people there.'"
10 Yahweh declares, "The people who live in Samaria do not know how to do what is right.
They violently rob other people, and they fill their fortresses with the things that they steal."

11 So this is what the Lord Yahweh says **to them**,

"An enemy army will come and surround your land.
They will tear down your fortifications,
and they will carry away the valuable things in your fortresses."

12 This is what Yahweh says,

"When a lion attacks a sheep,

sometimes a shepherd can grab from the lion only two legs of the sheep or a piece of its ear.

Similarly, only a few of you people of Israel who live in Samaria will survive,

along with only a side of a bed or a piece of a couch."

13 The Lord Yahweh, the God who commands the armies of angels, declares,
"Listen, and warn the descendants of Jacob:

14 Be aware that when I punish the people of Israel for the sins that they have committed,

I will also destroy the altars at Bethel.

I will cut off the horns that are on **the corners of** the **main** altar,

and they will fall to the ground.

15 I will tear down the houses where people live in the winter and the houses where they live in the summer.

I will destroy the **beautiful** houses that they have decorated with ivory.

I will destroy the mansions.

This will surely happen, because I, Yahweh, have said it."

4

1 Listen to this message, you **wealthy** women of **the city of** Samaria!

You have indulged yourselves and grown fat, just as the cattle in **the region of** Bashan grow fat.

You oppress poor people,

and you cause needy people to suffer.

Then you say to your husbands,

"Bring us **more wine** to drink!"

2 **But** Yahweh our Lord says, "Because I am holy, I solemnly promise this:

Indeed the time is coming when

your enemies will capture you and take you away, **as easily** as someone catches fish with hooks.

They will do this to every last one of you.

3 The enemies will break through your city walls, and then each of you women
will go straight out through the gap in front of her.
Each of you will flee toward Harmon.
I, Yahweh, declare that this will happen.

4 You act like I am telling you this: Go to the town of Bethel and sin!
Go to the town of Gilgal and sin even more!
Bring your animal sacrifices to the altars there every morning,
and bring a tenth of your crops every third day!

5 Burn bread that contains yeast as an offering to thank me,
and announce the offerings that you bring willingly!
Make sure to loudly brag about them!
I say these things because that is what you Israelite people love to do.
I, Yahweh your Lord, declare this.

6 I am also the one who caused you to have no food at all in any of your cities and
towns,
yet you did not stop sinning and become loyal to me again.
I, Yahweh, declare this.

7 I am also the one who kept you from getting rain
when there were still three months before your crops were ready to harvest.
Sometimes I sent rain on one town
and held it back from another town.
I made it rain on some fields,
but I gave no rain to other fields, so the crops there dried up.

8 People from towns without water would stagger to a town that did have water,
but they could not get enough water to drink.
But even so you did not stop sinning and become loyal to me again.
I, Yahweh, declare this.

9 I made your crops dry up and have disease.
Locusts ate up everything
in your many gardens and vineyards and on your fig trees and olive trees,

yet you did not stop sinning and become loyal to me again.

I, Yahweh, declare this.

10 I made many of you become diseased, just as I had done to **the people of** Egypt **long ago**.

I caused your enemies to kill your young men in wars, and I let your enemies capture your horses.

I made you smell the stench **of their corpses** in the camps **where they died**,

yet you did not stop sinning and become loyal to me again.

I, Yahweh, declare this.

11 I destroyed some of you, just as I destroyed **the cities of** Sodom and Gomorrah **long ago**.

Those of you **who survived** were like a burning stick that someone grabs out of a fire **before it burns up completely**,

yet you did not stop sinning and become loyal to me again.

I, Yahweh, declare this.

12 Because of that, you people of Israel, this is what I am going to do to you.

And because I am going to do this to you,

prepare to **truly** meet me, your God, people of Israel!"

13 Prepare yourselves, because this is who he is: he is the one who formed the mountains and who creates the wind.

He reveals to people what they are thinking.

He makes the morning light and the darkness.

Even the highest mountains are small things to him.

He is Yahweh, God who commands the heavenly armies; that is his name!

5

1 You people of Israel, listen to this sad funeral song

that I am singing about you:

2 Enemies have devastated my dear people of Israel,

and they are unable to defend themselves.

The enemies have come into their land and can do to them whatever they want to do there.

There is no one to help them.

3 You will need this sad funeral song because Yahweh our Lord says this about Israel,

"When your enemies attack you, a town that sends out a thousand soldiers to fight
will have only a hundred who survive,
and a town that sends out a hundred soldiers
will have only ten who survive."

4 But Yahweh also says this to you people of Israel,

"Sincerely worship me again, and then you will live.
5 Do not go to the town of Bethel **to worship anything there**,
and do not go to the town of Gilgal,
and do not travel to the town of Beersheba **to worship there, either**.
Your enemies will certainly take the people of Gilgal away to a foreign country,
and the people of Bethel will experience evil things because they worship evil things."

6 Sincerely worship Yahweh again, and then you will live.

If you do not do that, Yahweh will punish you descendants of Joseph as suddenly and fiercely as a fire spreads.
Yahweh will punish you like a fire that destroys everything, and that no one in Bethel will be able to stop.
7 **I am talking to you** people who do not decide things fairly. Instead, you make life **as bitter as the taste of** wormwood for people.
You consider that living in the right way is **as worthless as trash** on the ground.
8 There is one who created **the star groups that people call** the Pleiades and Orion.
Every morning he turns the darkness into daylight,
and **every evening** he turns the daylight into darkness.
He summons the waters in the sea

and pours them out as rain on the surface of the earth.
The name of that one is Yahweh!
9 He suddenly destroys strong people,
and destroys the strong walls of cities.
10 You people hate any leader who officially corrects people who do wrong,
and you hate anyone who tells the truth.

11 So, because you oppress poor people

and force them to give you part of their grain, this is what will happen:
Although you have built large mansions out of cut stone,
you will not live in them.
Although you have planted pleasant vineyards,
you will not drink the wine that comes from them.
12 This will happen because I know that you have sinned very many times,
and that the things that you have done are terrible.
You oppress people who do what is right, and you accept bribes to do what is wrong,
and at the city gate where leaders decide legal matters you treat poor people unjustly and send them away.
13 So at that time, wise people will be quiet,
because it will be customary in that time for people to do evil things.
14 Start doing what is good, and stop doing what is evil,
in order that you may stay alive.
If you do that, Yahweh, God the commander of the heavenly armies, will help you,
just as you claim that he does.
15 Hate what is evil, and love what is good,
and make sure that people decide things fairly at the city gatewhere leaders decide legal matters.
If you do that, maybe Yahweh, God the commander of the heavenly armies,
will act kindly toward you descendants of Joseph who are still alive.

16 So this is what Yahweh, God **the commander** of the heavenly armies, our Lord, says,

"People will be weeping loudly in all the public squares,
and in all the streets people will cry out, 'This is terrible! This is terrible!'
People will summon the farmers to come and mourn,
and they will summon those who lament at funerals to wail.

17 People will be weeping in all the vineyards,
because I will come and punish you." That is what Yahweh says.

18 Terrible things will happen to you people who long for the day when Yahweh comes!
You should not think that the day when Yahweh comes will be good for you.
On that day Yahweh will punish you severely, and nothing good will happen to you.

19 On that day, you will be like a man who runs away from a lion
but then meets a bear;
or who flees into his house and rests his hand on the wall,
and a snake bites him.

20 On the day when Yahweh judges people, he will surely punish you severely and nothing good will happen to you.
Yes, it will be a time when you are deeply sad; you will not be happy at all.

21 **Yahweh says,** "I hate your religious celebrations;
I completely reject them, and your assemblies **when you gather to worship** do not please me at all.

22 Even if you offer to me animals that you completely burn on the altar, and offerings of grain,
I will not accept them.
Even if you offer me your best animals as fellowship sacrifices,
I will pay no attention to them.

23 Your songs are just noise to me; stop singing them.
I refuse to listen to the music that you play on your harps.

24 Instead, you should be treating people justly,
and you should always be doing what is right.

You should be doing these things continually, like a stream of water that flows and never stops.

25 You people of Israel, when your ancestors traveled through the wilderness for forty years,
they did not bring animal sacrifices and grain offerings to me.
26 Instead, you have carried the idols that you made for yourselves:
Sikkuth, the god you treated as your king,
and Kiyyun, the star-god that you worshiped.
27 So I will force you to go far away, beyond the city of Damascus, into exile."
That is what the one whose name is Yahweh, God **the commander** of the heavenly armies, says.

6 **1** Terrible things will happen to you people in Zion who do not worry about anything,
and also to you leaders in the city of Samaria who think that you are safe there.
You are the prominent men of **Israel,** the nation that thinks it is the most important nation of all.
You are the men to whom the people of Israel come **for you to help them**.
2 Go and look at the city of Calneh.
Then go on to the city of Hamath Rabbah,
and then go down to the city of Gath in Philistia.
Those cities are not better than your kingdoms,
and their territory is not larger than yours.
3 **Terrible things will happen to** you who refuse to think about the day when Yahweh will punish you,
but by your own actions you are shortening the time before violent people will come and rule over you.
4 **Terrible things will happen to** you who lie on expensive beds and lounge on your couches,
eating the meat of the most special sheep from your flocks and of the **fattened** calves from your stalls.

5 **Terrible things will happen to** you who sing idly to the sound of your harps
and try to be like King David by inventing musical instruments for yourselves.
6 **Terrible things will happen to**you who drink wine by the bowlful and rub the finest oils on your skin,
but who do not grieve at all that the descendants of Joseph are destroying themselves.
7 Because of all of that, soon you will be among the first ones whom your enemies will force to go into exile,
and your feasting and lounging on couches will come to an end.
8 The Lord Yahweh has solemnly sworn this on his own life. Yes, Yahweh, **the commander** of the heavenly armies, declares it,
"I despise **the nation** of which the descendants of Jacob are so proud,
and I hate their fortresses.
So I will deliver each city and everyone in it **to their enemies**."

9 When that happens, even if only ten men remain in a single house, they will all die. **10** A dead man's relative, the one who will burn his corpse, will carry the dead body out of the house. He will call to anyone still **hiding** in the farthest corner of the house, "Is anyone else there with you?" That person will answer, "No one." Then the relative will say, "Say no more! Especially we must not mention Yahweh's name!"

11 The reason is this: Yahweh is about to command **the enemy soldiers to attack you**,
and they will shatter all the houses, from large to small ones, into little pieces.
12 Horses do not gallop on rocky cliffs, and no one plows there with oxen.
Yet you have done something **even more absurd**:
instead of treating people justly, you kill them,
and instead of doing good things for each other, you make each other angry and resentful.
13 You are proud because you captured the town of Lo Debar,
and you boast, "We captured the town of Karnaim for ourselves because we are so strong!"

14 But this is what Yahweh, **the commander** of the heavenly armies, declares,
"Listen, you people of Israel! I am about to bring a foreign nation to attack you.
Its army will oppress you **throughout your entire land,** from Lebo Hamath **in the far north** to the brook of the Arabah **in the far south**."

7 **1** Yahweh our Lord showed me a vision. In the vision, he was forming a swarm of locusts **to destroy our crops**. This was happening right after the workers had harvested the king's share of the hay, when the second crop of the season was just starting to grow. **2** In the vision, when the locusts had finished eating everything green in the land, I cried out, "Yahweh our Lord, please forgive **us**! We people of Jacob are weak and helpless; we will not be able to survive this!" **3** So Yahweh changed his mind about this. Yahweh said, "This will not happen."

4 Then Yahweh our Lord showed me another vision. In it, Yahweh our Lord was summoning fire to punish **his people**. The fire dried up the great deep waters and then was burning up the land. **5** Then I cried out, "Yahweh our Lord, please stop! We people of Jacob will not be able to survive this, because we are weak and helpless!" **6** So Yahweh changed his mind about this also. Lord Yahweh said, "This will not happen, either."

7 Then Yahweh showed me another vision. In it, I saw the Lord standing beside a wall. Someone had built the wall very straight, using a plumb line. Yahweh was holding a plumb line in his hand. **8** Yahweh asked me, "Amos, what do you see?" I replied, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"Look, I am about to test my people the Israelites to see if they are living rightly,
just as a builder uses a plumb line to see if a wall is straight.
I will no longer hold back from punishing them **for their sin**.
9 I will destroy the hilltop shrines where the descendants of Isaac worship **idols**,
and I will demolish the other holy places in Israel,
and I will send men with swords to end the dynasty of King Jeroboam."

10 Then Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, sent **a message** to Jeroboam, the king of Israel. **In the message** he said, "Amos is plotting against you **right here** among the people of Israel. He is saying so much against you that the people of this land cannot bear to hear it. **11** In fact, this is

what Amos keeps saying, ‘Someone will kill Jeroboam with a sword, and an army will force the people of Israel to leave their own land and become exiles in a foreign country.’”

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, “You seer, get out of here! Run away to the country of Judah! Earn your living there, and do your prophesying there! **13** But you have prophesied **here** at Bethel for the last time, because this is the king’s holy place; it is a royal temple.”

14 Then Amos replied to Amaziah, “I am not a **professional** prophet, and I do not belong to any group of prophets. Instead, I take care of sheep, and I also take care of sycamore-fig trees. **15** But Yahweh took me away from tending the flock, and Yahweh said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people in Israel.’ **16** So now listen to what Yahweh has to say **to you**. You keep telling me, ‘Do not prophesy against the people of Israel, and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac!’ **17** Therefore, this is what Yahweh says **to you**,

> ‘**When your enemies come,** your wife will become a prostitute in this city,
> and they will kill your sons and your daughters with their swords,
> and they will measure your land with a rope and divide it up **among themselves**.
> As for you, you will die in a foreign, pagan country,
> and your enemies will certainly force the people of Israel to become exiles, far from their own land.’”

8 **1** Yahweh, my Lord, showed me a vision. I looked, and in the vision I saw a basket of ripe fruit. **2** He said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” I replied, “I see a basket of ripe fruit.” Then Yahweh said to me,

> “It is time for me to put an end to my people, the Israelites!
> I will no longer hold back from punishing them **for their sin**.
> **3** At that time, the people who sing songs in the temple will wail loudly instead of singing.
> There will be so many corpses
> that people will throw them everywhere. **Everyone,** be silent!” This is what Yahweh, my Lord, declares.

4 Listen to this, you people who oppress needy people

and get rid of the poor people in the land!

5 You say to yourselves, “We wish the new moon festival would be over, so that we could start selling our grain again!

We wish the Sabbath day would be over, so that we could start selling our wheat again!

Then we can cheat people by making the baskets that we measure our grain in smaller than standard,

and by making the weights for measuring the buyer’s silver heavier than standard, and we can also make our scales weigh dishonestly.

6 Then we can use our silver to buy poor people **to be our slaves**.

We can buy needy people for **only** a pair of sandals.

We can even sell the worthless chaff mixed in with the wheat!”

7 Yahweh has solemnly sworn by the very land that he gave to you descendants of Jacob,

“I will certainly never forget any of the **evil** things that you have done.

8 Because of the evil things that you have done, **it will be as though** the land itself will writhe,

and everyone who lives in the land will mourn.

It will be as though the whole land will heave up and down,

just as the Nile River in Egypt floods and then sinks back down again.”

9 Yahweh, my Lord, declares this, “At that time, **when I punish you,**

I will make the sun go down at noon.

Yes, I will make the earth become dark during the daytime.

10 Because of what I will do, your **religious** festivals will become times when you mourn,

and instead of singing joyful songs you will wail funeral dirges.

All of you will wear rough sackcloth

and shave your heads **to show that you are grieving**.

Because of what I will do, you will be as sorrowful as when parents grieve for
their only son who has died.
By the time I stop punishing you, you will be grieving bitterly."

11 Yahweh, my Lord, declares this, "Listen! There will soon be a time

when I will cause something to become very scarce in the land.
It will not be a time when people lack food or thirst for water.
Instead, it will be a time when people will not be able to hear any message
from me, Yahweh.
12 People will wander everywhere, staggering from one coastline to another
and from the north to the east.
They will roam around, searching for a message from me, Yahweh,
but they will not get one.
13 At that time, even the beautiful young women
and the strong young men will faint because they are so thirsty.
14 These are the people who make solemn promises using the name of the shameful
idol in Samaria.
Some of them make promises using the name of the god that people worship
in Dan,
and others make promises using the name of the god that people travel to
worship in Beersheba.
All of those people will fall down and die, and they will never get up again."

9 **1** **In another vision,** I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said,

"Strike the tops of the pillars **of the temple** so hard that the thresholds shake,
and shatter them so that the pieces fall down on all the people there **and crush
them**.
I will cause enemies to kill with swords anyone who survives.
None of them will be able to run away and escape.
2 Even if they dig down to the place where dead people go **as they try to escape
from me**,

I will reach down there and seize them.
Even if they climb up to the sky,
I will bring them down from there.
3 Even if they hide themselves on the top of Mount Carmel,
I will search for them there and capture them.
Even if they hide from me at the bottom of the sea,
I will command the sea snake there to bite them.
4 Even if their enemies capture them and force them to march away as exiles,
I will command those enemies to kill them there with their swords.
I will continually do things to harm them,
not to help them."

5 Yahweh our Lord, the commander of the heavenly armies,
is the one who can make the earth melt by touching it,
so that everyone who lives in it mourns.
He can make the whole land rise up and then sink down again,
just as the Nile River in Egypt rises and falls.
6 He made the stairway to his palace in the sky,
and he set his dome of the sky firmly in place above the earth.
He gathers up the water from the sea
and pours it out as rain on the surface of the ground.
The name of the one who does all this is Yahweh!

7 Yahweh declares this, "You people of Israel, you are just like the people of Cush to me.
It is true that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt,
but I also brought the Philistines from the land of Caphtor and the Arameans from the region of Kir.
8 Listen! I, Yahweh your Lord, am fully aware of how sinful you people are in the kingdom of Israel,
so I will destroy your kingdom and remove it from existing on the earth.
However, I will not completely destroy all of the descendants of Jacob."

That is what Yahweh declares.

9 Yahweh also says, “Listen! This will happen because I am giving the command
to send you people of Israel to live among all the nations,
and there **it will be as though** I am shaking you in a sieve**to sort you out into those who are faithful and those who are not faithful, just as a farmer shakes a sieve to separate grain from the stones**.
It will be as though not one pebble slips through the sieve and falls to the ground,
because not one of the unfaithful people among you will escape.

10 All of the sinful ones among my people will die as enemies kill them with swords.
They are the ones who say that nothing bad will ever happen to them.

11 At that time, I will restore the kingdom that King David once ruled,
the kingdom that sinners have ruined.
I will repair it and rebuild it,
and I will cause it to prosper again, as it did long ago,

12 so that the kingdom of my people may contain those who remain in Edom
and those who belong to me in all of the nations.”
That is what Yahweh declares, and he is the one who will do it.

13 Yahweh declares this, “Listen! The time is coming when **your crops will grow so well it will be as if**
those who plow the ground will catch up with those who are still harvesting the grain,
and those who tread on the grapes will still be working when the sowers are ready to start planting the seed.
There will be so much sweet wine
that **it will seem as if** it will flow down from the mountains and that all of the hills will melt **with it**.

14 For my people Israel I will make things as good as they were before they became captives **in other nations**.
They will rebuild the cities that now lie in ruins, and they will live in them.
They will plant vineyards and drink the wine that comes from them,

and they will plant gardens and eat the fruit that grows in them.

15 I will settle my people securely in their own land,

and no one will ever remove them again from the land that I gave to them."

That is what Yahweh your God says.

Obadiah

1 **1** This is a message that Yahweh our God gave to **me,** Obadiah, about the people of Edom.
Yahweh our God has said this to us:

"I have sent a messenger to other nations,
2 telling them to prepare to go and attack Edom." **Now Yahweh says this to the people of Edom:**
"Listen to me—I will soon cause you to become the weakest
and most despised nation **on the earth**.
3 Your capital city is high in the rocky cliffs,
and you are very proud.
You think that you are safe there—that no army can conquer you.
But you have deceived yourselves.
4 Even if you could live where eagles live or even higher than that, among the stars,
you would still not be safe there from the attackers that I am sending to you.
I, Yahweh, declare this **to you**.
5 When thieves break into someone's house during the night and rob them,
they certainly steal only the things that they want.
And people who pick grapes always leave a few grapes on the vines.
But**, unlike them,** attackers will destroy your country completely!
6 Descendants of Esau, these attackers will completely take away everything that you own.
They will even find **and take away** the valuable things that you have hidden.
7 All your allies will turn against you, and they will force you to leave your country.
Those with whom you have peace now will trick you and defeat you.
Those who eat meals with you now are planning to trap you.

You people of Edom do not understand any of this.

8 I, Yahweh, declare that at that time,

I will certainly destroy **even** Edom's **famous** wise men. No one living in those cliffs will know what to do any more.

9 The soldiers in the army of Edom will become terrified.

Then when your army stops fighting, the attackers will completely destroy all you people who live in the land of Edom."

10 "**All of this will happen because** you acted cruelly to your relatives who are descendants of Jacob**, the twin brother of your ancestor Esau**.

So now everyone will be ashamed of you, and the attackers will destroy you forever.

11 At the time when strangers carried away the Israelite's wealth, you did nothing to help them.

Foreigners conquered all the cities of Judah, and they even took whatever they wanted from Jerusalem.

And you were just as bad as those foreigners**, because you did nothing to help**.

12 You should not have gloated about the disaster that the Israelites were experiencing.

You should not have been happy when their towns were ruined.

You should not have made fun of them when they were suffering.

13 They are my people, so you should not have entered their city gates when they were experiencing this terrible disaster.

Yes, you! You should not have enjoyed watching them suffer.

You women should not have taken away their valuable possessions.

14 You should not have stood at the crossroads to kill some of the Israelites who were trying to escape.

You should not have captured others of them who had survived **and turned them over to their enemies** when they were experiencing those disasters."

15 "**You should have helped the Israelites,** because the time is coming soon when I, Yahweh, will judge and punish all the nations.

I will do the same things to you **people of Edom** that you did to others.

The same **evil** things that you did to others will happen to you.

16 **The people of Edom should not have done these evil things to you, people of Israel,**
because in the way that you suffered in Jerusalem, the hill where my holy temple is,
in that same way I will continue to punish all the other nations.
I will punish them severely and make them disappear completely.
17 But some people in Jerusalem will survive,
and Jerusalem will become a holy place.
Then the Israelites will once again occupy the land that belongs to them.
18 The people of Israel will be like a fire, and the people of Edom will be like dry grass.
They will destroy the people of Edom, just as fire completely burns up dry grass.
None of the descendants of Edom will survive.
This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it will happen."
19 The Israelites who live in the southern wilderness of Judea will capture the land of Edom.
The Israelites who live in the western foothills will capture the region of Phoenicia.
The Israelites will also capture the areas that belonged to **the tribe of** Ephraim and that surrounded **the city of** Samaria **to the north**.
The people of the tribe of Benjamin will capture the region east of the Jordan River.
20 A great number of the people from **the kingdom of** Israel were captured and taken away from their homes. They lived in the land of Canaan. **But they will return, and** they will capture and occupy that land as far **north** as Zarephath.
Many of the people were captured and taken away from Jerusalem. They now live in Sepharad. They will **return and** occupy the cities in the southern wilderness of Judea.
21 **After** Israel's military leaders **conquer the land of Edom, they** will **then** rule over Edom from high up in Jerusalem.
And Yahweh will be their king.

Jonah

1 **1** There was a man named Jonah, the son of Amittai. It happened **one day** that Yahweh spoke to him. This is what Yahweh said: **2** "I have seen that the people of Nineveh are continually doing things that are very evil. Therefore, get moving. Go to Nineveh, that huge capital city **of Assyria**, and proclaim to the people there that I am planning to punish them for their evil actions." **3** So Jonah went, **but in the opposite direction,** towards the **far-away** city of Tarshish, thinking that he could get away from Yahweh there. He went down to **the port at** the city of Joppa and found a ship that was about to go to Tarshish. The captain of the ship asked him for money, and he gave it to him. Then he went down into the ship in order to go with the crew of the ship to Tarshish, in order to get away from Yahweh.

4 But Yahweh caused a strong wind to blow over the sea, and such an enormous storm happened that the waves were about to break the ship apart. **5** The sailors were frightened and each one prayed loudly to the god that he worshiped **for that god to save them from the storm**. They even threw the cargo from the ship into the sea in order to make the ship lighter, so that it would not so easily **take on water and** sink. While all of this was going on, Jonah was down inside the ship, lying down and sleeping soundly!

6 Then the captain of the crew went down to where Jonah was **sleeping**. He **wakened Jonah and** said to him, "Something must be wrong with you, to sleep during a storm like this! Get up! Pray earnestly to the god that you worship! Perhaps that god will think about us and save us."

7 After a while the sailors started to say to each other, "We need to cast lots, to determine who has caused this terrible thing to happen to us!" They all agreed, so they cast lots, and the lot indicated Jonah.

8 So the sailors said these things to Jonah: "You must tell us who has caused this terrible thing to happen to us. What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What country are you from? What group of people do you belong to?"

9 Jonah answered them, “I am a Hebrew. I worship Yahweh, the One True God who lives
in heaven. He is the one who made both the sea and the land.” 10 Jonah also told the sailors
that he was trying to get away from Yahweh in order to avoid doing something that Yahweh had
told him to do. So now, when they learned that Yahweh was the one controlling the sea, they were
terrified.

One of the sailors said to Jonah, “You have done a terrible thing! Now we are all about to die
because of you!” 11 The storm continued to become worse, and the waves continued to become
bigger. So one of the sailors asked Jonah, “What should we do to you so that the sea might
calm down and stop threatening us?”

12 Jonah told them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. If you do that, the sea will
calm down and stop threatening you. This will work because I am certain that this terrible
storm happened to you because I did not do what Yahweh told me to do.”

13 But the sailors did not want to do that. Instead, they tried hard to row the ship back to the
land. But they could not do it because the waves became even bigger and stronger against
them. 14 Finally, all of the sailors prayed to Yahweh, “O Yahweh, you are the one controlling
all of these things that have happened to us, including this storm and the lot that we cast.
Therefore we beg you, Yahweh, please do not let us die because of this man. No, do not kill us
for killing someone who has done nothing against us.” 15 Then they picked Jonah up and
threw him into the sea. Immediately, the sea became calm. 16 When that happened, the sailors
became greatly awed at how powerful Yahweh was. They offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and
solemnly promised to worship him.

17 Meanwhile, Yahweh caused a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish
for three days and three nights.

2 1 While he was inside the fish, Jonah prayed to Yahweh, the God whom he worshiped.
2 This is what he said:

> “When I was deeply distressed, I prayed to Yahweh to rescue me, and he did.
> Even though I was in the belly of a fish where I thought I would die, yet even
> there you heard my voice and listened to me when I begged for you to help me.

3 You had thrown me into the deep water, into the middle of the sea where the
currents swirled around me.
All of those terrible waves that you made passed above me.
4 But as for me, I thought, ‘You have thrown me away; you do not care even to
look at me;
even so I may still see your holy temple again.’
5 Water was all around me, close to ending my life; yes, deep water surrounded
me;
seaweed became wrapped around my head.
6 I went down as far as the place where the mountains start rising from the bottom
of the sea; I felt as though the earth was a prison with no possible way for me to
escape.
But you, Yahweh God, whom I worship, rescued me from going down to the
place of the dead.
7 When I was almost dead, I thought about you, Yahweh, to ask you for help.
And from your holy place where you live, you accepted my prayer.
8 Those who worship worthless idols
reject you, the one who would always be faithful to them.
9 But I will not do that. Rather, I will give a sacrifice to you as I loudly thank you.
I will do what I have solemnly promised you that I would do.
Yahweh, you are the only One True God who saves people.”

10 Then Yahweh commanded the huge fish to spew out Jonah, and the fish spewed out Jonah
onto the land.

3 1 Then Yahweh spoke to Jonah again. This is what Yahweh said: 2 “Get moving! Go to
Nineveh, the large capital city of Assyria, and preach to the people who live there the message
that I tell you to preach to them.” 3 This time, Jonah got moving and went to Nineveh, just as
Yahweh had told him to do.

Now Nineveh was an extremely large city. It was so large that a person had to walk for
three days to go completely through it. 4 When Jonah arrived, he began walking through the

city for about one day. Then he proclaimed to the people in the city, “Forty days from now, God will destroy Nineveh!”

5 The people of Nineveh believed the message from God **that Jonah proclaimed**. They decided that everyone should fast and wear coarse cloth on their bodies **in order to show that they were sorry for the evil things that they had been doing**. So everyone in the city did that, from the most important people to the least important people. 6 When the king of Nineveh heard about the message **that Jonah was preaching**, he got up from his throne. He took off his royal robes, put on coarse cloth instead, and sat down on a heap of cold ashes. **He did all this to show that he also was sorry for the evil actions that he had been doing.**

7 Then he sent messengers to proclaim to the people in Nineveh: “The king and his officials have decreed that no person or animal may taste any food nor drink any water. Even the cows and the sheep may not graze. 8 Every person and every **domestic** animal must wear coarse cloth on their bodies. Everyone must pray fervently to God. Also, everyone must stop doing the evil things that they have been doing and the violent things that they have been doing **to other people**. 9 If everyone does those things, it is possible that this god will change his mind and be merciful to us. He may relent from being so angry with us, with the result that we will live.”

10 So the people did those things and stopped doing the evil actions that they had been doing. God saw all of this. So God had mercy on them and did not destroy them as he had said he would do. **Even though he had said that,** he did not do it.

4 1 For Jonah, it was wrong, terribly wrong**, that God did not destroy Nineveh**. He became very angry about it. 2 He prayed to Yahweh, “See! Yahweh, This is exactly what I said would happen even before I left home! I knew that you are a God who acts very kindly and compassionately **toward all people**. You do not quickly become angry **with people who act in evil ways**. You love people very much, and you prefer to be merciful to people rather than to punish them. Therefore, I ran away to go to Tarshish in order to stop this very thing from happening. 3 So now, Yahweh, please kill me, because I would rather die than continue to live **if you do not destroy Nineveh**.”

4 Yahweh replied, “It is wrong for you to be angry **that I did not destroy Nineveh**.”

5 Then Jonah left the city **of Nineveh** and sat down **a short distance away** on the east side of the city. There he made a small shelter to shade himself **from the sun**. He stayed under the shelter and waited to see what would happen to the city.

6 Then Yahweh God caused a plant to grow up **very quickly** above Jonah to shade his head **from the sun**. Yahweh did that in order to remove the bad things that Jonah was experiencing. Jonah was very happy to have this plant **that shaded him from the sun**. **7** Then, at dawn the next day, God caused a worm to chew the plant so much that the plant withered away. **8** Then, shortly after the sun had risen, God caused a hot wind to blow from the east. The sun shone very hotly on Jonah's head, and Jonah began to feel faint. He wanted to die and he exclaimed, "It would be better for me to die than to continue living!"

9 Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about what happened to the plant?"

Jonah replied, "Yes, it is right for me to be angry! I am so angry that I want to die!"

10 Then Yahweh said to him, "As for you, you felt very sad about the plant when it died, even though you did not work to take care of it, nor did you do anything to make it grow. It grew up in one night, and it completely withered by the end of the next night. **11** In the same way, but very much more, it is right for me to feel sad about **destroying** the huge city of Nineveh. There are more than 120,000 people living there who do not know right from wrong. There are also many animals. **I created all of them, so** it is right for me to be concerned about them."

Micah

1 **1** These are the messages that Yahweh gave to Micah, who was from **the town of** Moresheth **in Judah**. Yahweh gave these messages to Micah during the time when Jotham, **then** Ahaz, and **then** Hezekiah ruled as kings of Judah. These are messages about what Yahweh showed Micah would happen to Samaria and to Jerusalem.

2 Hear this, all you people everywhere on the earth!
The Lord Yahweh is about to testify against you
from the holy place where he rules **in heaven**.
3 But now look! Yahweh is about to come out from heaven and come down to the earth
where he will walk on the tops of the mountains.
4 **He is so powerful that it will be as though** the mountains will melt beneath him
as easily as wax melts near a fire
and as quickly as water rushes down a hillside,
and the valleys will split apart.
5 All of this will happen because the people of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, have sinned **against Yahweh**.
It was **the leaders of the people in** the city of Samaria who led all of the descendants of Jacob to sin!
It was **the leaders of the people in** Jerusalem who led the people of Judah **to worship idols** on the hilltops!
6 So Yahweh says, "I will turn the city of Samaria into a heap of rubble in the countryside;
it will be a place for planting vineyards.
I will roll the stones of its buildings down into the valley
and strip the buildings down to their foundations.
7 Enemies will smash all of the idols in Samaria to pieces

and burn up all the gifts that people gave at the idol temples.
I will make all of the idols there into ruins
because the people of Samaria collected these precious things by their business of prostitution at the temples,
so enemies will carry them off and use them to pay prostitutes elsewhere."
8 Because of all of this, I will weep and wail.
I will walk around without my sandals and without my clothes.
I will howl like a jackal
and cry out like a family of owls.
9 This is because nothing now can stop Yahweh from destroying Samaria.
And because the same thing will also happen to Judah;
it is as though the enemy army has arrived **already** at the gates of Jerusalem,
the city where my people live.
10 Do not tell **our enemies in the city of** Gath **about this**!
Certainly do not cry aloud!
Instead, roll in the dust at Beth Leaphrah.
11 You people who live in Shaphir
will march away naked and ashamed.
The people of Zaanan
will not go out **to help you**.
The people of Beth Ezel will mourn,
and by their mourning **you will know that** Beth Ezel will not help you stand **against the enemy**.
12 Indeed, the people of Maroth wait anxiously for something good to happen,
but nothing good will come.
Instead, Yahweh has caused terrible things to happen,
all the way to the gates of Jerusalem.
13 You people of Lachish,
hitch your swift horses to your war chariots **and flee**!
You were the first ones to lead the people of Zion to sin,
because you caused the people of Israel to rebel against Yahweh.

14 So you leaders in Jerusalem will have to send farewell gifts
as you part with the town of Moresheth Gath, as a father does when giving a daughter in marriage.
The town of Achzib
will prove to be deceptive to the rulers of Israel.
15 You people of Mareshah,
Yahweh will bring a conqueror to take over your town, as well.
The honored leaders of Israel
will go to Adullam once again to hide in the cave.
16 You leaders of Israel, completely shave your heads in mourning
for the children whom you love.
Shave yourselves completely bald, like an eagle,
because your enemies will take your children far away from you into exile.

2 **1** Terrible things will happen to you who lie awake in bed at night
planning how to do evil things.
You get up at dawn and you do those things,
simply because you are able to do them.
2 You want fields that belong to other people, so you forcefully take them;
you want their houses, so you steal them.
You cheat people and take away their property,
including what their families have owned for generations.
3 So this is what Yahweh says, "Listen to me! I am planning to destroy you people,
and you will not be able to escape from it. You will no longer be able to act
proudly, because you will be experiencing terrible things. **4** At that time, your
enemies will mock you by singing this very sad song about you, 'Yahweh has
completely destroyed us Israelites! Yahweh is taking the portions of land away
from us that he had given to us! We are extremely distressed because he is giving
our fields to our enemies!'" **5** So when Yahweh's people return to divide up the
land again,
no one from your families will be there to receive any of it.
6 False prophets who hear me say this prophesy to me,

"Do not prophesy!"

They do not prophesy about these things, therefore Yahweh will certainly dishonor **them**.

7 You descendants of Jacob should not say such things as,

"Yahweh does not become impatient."

Or "These are not the kinds of things that he does."

What I say certainly helps those who do what is right.

8 **However, Yahweh says,**

"Recently my people have turned against me and become my enemies.

When people pass by feeling safe,

like soldiers returning from battle **to their own people**,

you strip the fine outer garments right off their fronts.

9 You force the women among my people

out of the homes that they love,

and you take away from their children forever

the good things that I wanted to give them.

10 So get up and leave!

This land is no longer a place where you can live.

You have made it unacceptable to me by your sins,

so I will destroy it in a way that is severe."

11 If someone who speaks nothing but lies were to say,

"I will preach that you should drink wine and beer!"

that is the kind of prophet you people would accept.

12 "However, some day I will certainly gather all of you descendants of Jacob.

I will certainly bring together the Israelite people who survive.

I will bring them together in one place, as a shepherd gathers a flock of sheep into a good pasture.

They will make a lot of noise because there will be very many of them.

13 I will send someone who will open the way in front of them, and they will follow behind him, going out through the gate. Their king will go before them, and **I,** Yahweh, will be the one leading them."

3

1 Then I said,

"You leaders of the people of Jacob

and you rulers of the people of Israel, listen to me!

You are the ones who should know all about how to treat people fairly.

2 Yet you hate what is right and love what is evil!

You violently rob my people

as though you are stripping off their skin and flesh.

3 You greedily strip my people of everything that they have

as though you are a butcher who strips off their skin,

breaks their bones,

chops them up,

puts them into a cooking pot,

and eats them."

4 Someday, when bad things happen to those leaders, they will call out for Yahweh to help them,

but he will not help them.

He will be as diligent to ignore them at that time,

as they were to do evil deeds.

5 This is what Yahweh says,

"This is about the prophets who are misleading my people.

They prophesy good things for anyone giving them something to eat.

However, they declare holy war against anyone who does not give them food.

6 Because of that, it will be as though it is always night for you prophets because you will no longer be able to see visions,

and you will no longer be able to practice divination.

Yes, it will be as though the sun has set for you prophets even during the day,

because I will show you nothing."

7 Those who claim to see the future will feel ashamed,

and those who practice divination will feel disgraced.

They will all cover their faces to express how ashamed they are,
because God will not answer them.
8 But as for me, Yahweh's Spirit greatly empowers me
to do what is right and to be strong
so that I can tell the people of Jacob how they have rebelled **against God**
and tell the people of Israel how they have sinned.
9 You leaders of the people of Jacob
and you rulers of the people of Israel, listen to this!
You are the ones who hate it when people do what is right,
and when people say what is true, you change it into something false.
10 You are getting the wealth to build up Jerusalem
by murdering people and treating people unjustly.
11 The city's leaders decide cases **favorably** only for those who give them bribes.
The city's priests teach only when people pay them **well**.
The city's prophets require people to pay them money in order to tell them what they think will happen to them.
Yet those same leaders trust in Yahweh and say,
"Yahweh is among us,
so nothing bad will happen to us."
12 So, because of what you leaders are doing,
enemies will make Mount Zion look like a field that a farmer has plowed.
Jerusalem will become a pile of rubble,
and the temple hill will become an overgrown forest.

4 **1** But Yahweh says that in the latter days,
the mountain where his temple stands will become the most important of all the mountains.
Yes, Yahweh will cause it to be the most important place,
and a lot of people from many different people groups will come there **to worship**.
2 **People from** many nations will gather and say **to each other**,

"Let us go to the mountain where Yahweh is,
to the temple where we can worship the God whom Jacob worshiped.
There God will teach us how he wants us to live,
and we will do what he tells us to do."
Indeed, Zion is the place from which God will send out his instructions,
and from Jerusalem Yahweh will announce his messages.

3 Yahweh will settle disputes among many peoples
and will make decisions for powerful nations that are far away.
Then those peoples will reshape their implements of war
into implements for farming.
Armies of nations will no longer fight against **armies of** other nations,
and people will no longer train to be soldiers.

4 Everyone will sit **peacefully** under his own grapevines
and under his own fig trees,
and no one will cause any of them to be afraid.
That will certainly happen because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, has commanded it.

5 Even though each one of all of the other people groups obeys its own god,
as for us, we will obey Yahweh our God forever.

6 Yahweh says, "At that time
I will gather the people who are injured
and those who are scattered,
that is, everyone whom I have caused to suffer.

7 I will cause the injured ones to be the faithful survivors of my people
and I will cause all of those whom I drove away to become a mighty nation.
Then **I,** Yahweh will rule over them on Mount Zion,
now and forever.

8 You people of Zion, who are like a watchtower on the hill guarding my people,
I will again authorize you to rule.
Jerusalem will once again be the capitol of my kingdom.

9 **But** now you are crying out,

and it is not because you have no king,
or because your advisors have all died.
You act as though you are suffering greatly, as much as a woman who is birthing a child!

10 People of Zion, you should agonize and wail like a woman birthing a child,
because now you must leave this city
and live out in the open fields.
You will go all the way to Babylon.
However, while you are there,
I, Yahweh will rescue you.
That is where he will take you away from your enemies.

11 But now **the armies of** many nations have gathered to attack you.
They are saying, 'We are here to destroy **this city**!
We want to see the ruins of Zion!'

12 But as for them, they do not know what **I,** Yahweh am thinking.
They do not understand that this is what I have planned **for them**.
In fact, I have gathered them together **to destroy them**,
just as a farmer gathers grain onto a threshing floor **to crush it**.

13 So you people of Zion, become active and defeat your enemies!
You can do this because I will cause you to be very strong.
So destroy **these** many peoples
and give to **me,** Yahweh, the Ruler of the whole earth,
everything valuable that your enemies possess."

5 **1** Now, people **of Jerusalem**, gather yourselves into a troop!
Even though you have a wall to protect your city, enemy soldiers have surrounded it.
They are here to overpower and humiliate the ruler of Israel.

2 However, **I have something to say about** Bethlehem in the region of Ephrathah.
Even though the clan that lives there is the smallest of the clans of Judah,

someone who will rule Israel for me will come from that town.
He has been active since ancient times, from eternity.

3 So God will allow Israel's enemies to conquer them,
until the time when she who will bear gives birth.
Then the rest of those who, with him, are part of Israel
will rejoin their fellow Israelites.

4 Yahweh will strengthen him to rule and to care for his people
as majestically and authoritatively as if Yahweh, his God, were doing those things himself.
His people will live **safely**,
because, at that time, people all over the earth will honor him.

5 He will cause his people to prosper.
When **the army of** Assyria attacks our land
and breaks through our fortresses,
we will appoint many leaders
to lead our army to fight against them.

6 They will lead our army to rule the land of Assyria,
that is, the territory that Nimrod founded **long ago**.
The ruler will rescue us from the Assyrians
when they cross our borders to invade our land.

7 Then the descendants of Jacob who have survived will live
among many other peoples.
They will be a blessing for those peoples, just as the dew and the rain **are**
that Yahweh sends for the grass.
They will depend on Yahweh **to sustain them** just as the grass does,
and not on other people.

8 Yes, the descendants of Jacob who have survived will be in other nations,
living among many other peoples.
But they will be **powerful,** like a lion is among the other animals.
If they need to do so, they can easily defeat those peoples,
just as a young lion pounces on sheep and tears them apart,

and no one can rescue them.

9 **Yahweh,** we want you to powerfully defeat all of your enemies
and to destroy them completely!

10 Yahweh declares, "At that time,
I will take away your **war** horses
and I will destroy your chariots.

11 I will tear down the cities in your land
and I will destroy all of your fortresses.

12 I will stop you from practicing witchcraft,
and there will be no more fortune tellers among you.

13 I will destroy your idols
and your sacred stone pillars,
and then you will no longer worship
things that you yourselves have made.

14 I will remove the **poles that you use to worship the goddess** Asherah,
and I will destroy your cities.

15 Because I am very angry,
I will severely punish **the people of** the nations
that have not obeyed **me**."

6

1 Listen, **everyone,** because Yahweh has something to say,
"**Micah,** stand up and present **my** case,
and let the mountains and the hills be witnesses to what you say."

2 **It as though** the mountains and the enduring foundations of the earth are listening as Yahweh contends **against his people**.
Indeed, Yahweh is bringing charges against his people;
he is about to argue his case against Israel.

3 **Yahweh says,**"My people, you act as though I have harmed you!
You treat me as though I have made things difficult for you!
If you can accuse me of anything, then do it now!

4 Instead of doing bad things,

I brought your ancestors out of Egypt,
rescuing them from the place where they had lived as slaves.
I sent Moses to lead them,
along with his older brother Aaron and his older sister Miriam.
5 My people, remember when Balak, the king of Moab,
wanted to conspire with Balaam son of Beor to curse your ancestors,
and think about how Balaam answered him.
Remember what happened as your ancestors traveled from Shittim to Gilgal,
so that you may recognize that I, Yahweh, have always done the right things
for you." **6** An Israelite asks, "What should I bring when I come to Yahweh,
the God who lives in the highest heaven,
and bow down before him?
Should I bring offerings to burn;
should I bring one-year-old calves as sacrifices?
7 Will Yahweh accept thousands of rams
or vast quantities of olive oil?
Should I sacrifice my firstborn child to pay for my sin?
Can a sacrifice from my physical body compensate for my spiritual sin?"
8 No! Yahweh has already told you, human person, what is good
and that he wants from you only this:
He wants you to do what is just, to love being faithful to others,
and to conduct yourself humbly as you live before your God.
9 Yahweh is calling out a message to the people of the city of Jerusalem.
(Truly wise people revere you, Yahweh.)
Listen carefully, you tribe of Israel and all leaders that Yahweh has appointed!
10 "It disgusts me that wicked people still have wealth in their houses
that they got by cheating others,
and that they use measures that are smaller than they should be.
This is something that I have cursed.
11 No one is innocent who uses dishonest scales
or a bag of deceptive weights.

12 The rich people in this city always act violently to others.
All of the people who live here tell lies.
Yes, they always speak deceitfully.
13 For my part, I will attack you severely.
I will ruin you because of your sins.
14 As for you, you will eat **food**, but it will not satisfy you
because it will rush right through you.
You will try to save **people**,
but you will not be able to rescue **anyone**
and even if you do rescue a few, I will allow enemies to kill them.
15 As for you, you will plant crops,
but you will not harvest them.
As for you, you will press olives,
but you will not get to use the olive oil.
Yes, also with the wine—you will crush grapes,
but you will not get to drink any of it.
16 These things will happen because you follow the **wicked** laws that King Omri established
and do all of the **evil** things that King Ahab and his descendants practiced.
You have lived according to what they advised,
so I will destroy your city
and cause people of other nations to scorn everyone who lives there.
Other peoples will detest you, because that is what my people deserve."

7 **1** I am very miserable!
It is because I am **very frustrated** like someone who looks for fruit to pick
after everyone else has already picked all of the summer fruit and harvested all of the grapes.
I am like someone who cannot find a single cluster of grapes to eat
or an early fig, which he longs for.
2 **I am looking for** faithful people, but all of them have disappeared from the land,

and there are no longer any honest people among us.
All of the people who remain are eager to kill others;
each person tries to find ways to exploit his fellow citizens.
3 They are energetic and skillful in doing evil things.
Government officials and judges demand bribes.
Powerful people tell others what they want for themselves,
and they all plot together to get it done.
4 Even the best people among them are harmful,
and even those who seem the most honest, cause people pain.
The time that the prophets foretold,
the time when God will punish those who do evil things, is coming soon.
This is when they will panic.
5 So, do not trust anyone, not even a neighbor or a friend.
Be careful what you say
even to your own wife!
6 Indeed, even sons treat their fathers contemptuously,
and daughters defy their mothers.
Daughters-in-law defy their mothers-in-law.
A person's enemies
are the people who live in his own household.

7 But as for me, I will watch to see what Yahweh will do **to help me**.
I intend to wait confidently for God, who saves me.
The God whom I worship will listen when I call to him.
8 You who are our enemies,
do not celebrate over what has happened to us,
because even though you have defeated us, we will recover.
Even though it looks like everything is bad for us,
Yahweh will take care of us.
9 We will patiently endure whatever Yahweh does to punish us,
because we have sinned against him.

Eventually he will defend us
and make things right for us.
He will change everything bad around us to good,
and we will see that he always does what is right.
10 I want my enemies to see the same thing,
and then everyone will completely despise them.
They are the ones who mocked me by saying,
"Yahweh your God is not helping you at all!"
But at that time I will watch
as people destroy the homes of my enemies,
making them just like the mud in the streets.

11 **People of Zion,** the day is coming when you will rebuild your walls!
On that day, your city will extend far beyond its present boundaries.
12 On that day people will come to you
from everywhere. The places they will come from will be from Assyria to Egypt,
and from Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River,
from one sea to another and from every mountain.
13 **In contrast the rest of** the earth will become an empty wasteland
because of the **evil** things its people have done.
14 **Yahweh,** protect and guide your people, as a shepherd does for his sheep!
They are the people whom you have chosen to belong to you.
They are like sheep that live apart from others
in a wooded area of Mount Carmel,
but give them the rich pasturelands
of the Bashan and Gilead regions
that they enjoyed long ago.

15 **Yahweh says,**

"Yes, just as I did long ago when I rescued your ancestors from Egypt,

I will do amazing things for you.”

16 People from many nations will see **what Yahweh does for his people**,
and what they see will humiliate them
because they thought that they were powerful, but they are not.
They will be so amazed that they will be unable to say
or hear anything.
17 They will grovel on the ground like a snake,
like an insect in the dirt.
They will be so afraid that they will come trembling from their fortresses.
They will be very afraid as they approach Yahweh, the God whom we worship.
They will be afraid because of you, **Yahweh**.
18 **Yahweh,** no other God is like you!
You forgive the sins of the people who have
remained faithful to you, those who belong to you.
You do not stay angry forever
because you are the one who delights in faithfully loving us.
19 You will be merciful to us once again.
You will completely forgive all of our sins,
as though you are throwing them into the deepest part of the ocean.
20 You will show the descendants of Jacob that you are trustworthy,
and you will faithfully love the descendants of Abraham,
just as you solemnly promised to our ancestors
long ago.

Nahum

1

1 I am Nahum, from the village of Elkosh. This is a message about the city of
Nineveh, a message that Yahweh gave me in a vision.

2 Yahweh our God tolerates no rival gods to himself.
Yahweh is very angry with those who worship other gods, and he punishes them.
He continues to be angry with those who oppose him.

3 Yahweh does not quickly become angry;
but he is very powerful,
and he will certainly punish those who have done evil things.
Wherever Yahweh walks, there are whirlwinds and storms,
and the clouds are like dust around his feet.

4 When he commands oceans and rivers to become dry, they dry up.
He causes the grass to wither
in the fields in the region of Bashan and on the slopes of Mount Carmel,
and he causes the flowers in Lebanon to fade.

5 When he appears, it is as though the mountains quake and the hills melt;
the earth quakes before him, and all the people on the earth tremble.

6 There is no one who can resist him when he becomes extremely angry;
there is no one who can survive when Yahweh is angry with him.
When he is very angry, it is as though fire blazes out from him;
it is as though mountains explode into pieces before him.

7 Yahweh is good;
he protects us, his people, when we experience troubles.
He takes care of those who trust in him.

8 But he will completely destroy Nineveh with an overwhelming flood.
Wherever his enemies go,

9 terrible things will happen to them. So it is useless for you people of Nineveh
to plot against Yahweh.
He will destroy your plan quickly;
he will not need to strike you two times.
10 The Ninevites will be like tangled thorn-bushes or dry stubble **in a fire**;
they will be like the wine in their own cups.
All of those things disappear quickly and completely.
11 Yes, in the city of Nineveh there are people who advise and plan evil deeds
against Yahweh. **12** But this is what Yahweh says **to the people of Judah**:
"Although the nation of Assyria has very many people
and **its army** is very powerful,
Nevertheless I will shear them **like helpless sheep** and destroy those who plan
evil deeds.
Although I have punished you,
I will not punish you again.
13 Now I will cause the people of Assyria to no longer enslave you; it will be as
though I will break off the chains on your hands and feet."

14 And this is what Yahweh also declares about the people of Nineveh:

"The people of Nineveh will not have any descendants who will continue to have
their family names.
And I will destroy all the wooden and metal idols
that are in their temples.
I will cause them to be killed and sent to their graves, because they are vile!"
15 You people of Judah, look to the mountains! A messenger will come from there,
and he will bring good news to you.
He will declare that you will now have peace.
So keep your festivals, and do what you solemnly promised Yahweh that you
would do.
You can do this because your wicked enemies will not invade your country
again,

because I will destroy them completely.

2 **1** You people of Nineveh, your enemies are coming to attack you. So place guards
on the tops of the walls around the city! Guard the roads into the city! Get ready
to fight! Gather all of your troops together! **2** Even though soldiers have pillaged
the people of Jacob and destroyed their vineyards, Yahweh will cause other
nations to honor them again. Yes, Jacob and Israel will be majestic again. **3** The
shields of Yahweh's soldiers are red,

and they will wear bright red uniforms.

The metal of their chariot wheels will flash like fire when they prepare them
for battle.

The spears will look like **a forest of** quivering cypress trees **as the soldiers
raise them**.

4 Their chariots dash through the streets of Nineveh

and rush furiously through the plazas.

Appearing to move as quickly as lightning,

they look like flaming torches.

5 The **attacking** commander calls to his officers

and they come to him so quickly that they stumble.

They run up to the city wall **to attack it**;

they set up a large wooden shield **above the soldiers to protect them**.

6 Soldiers open the floodgates that hold back the rivers,

and the palace collapses.

7 Yahweh decrees that soldiers will take the inhabitants of Nineveh away as
captives.

The women of Nineveh moan like doves

and beat their breasts **to show that they are very sad**. **8** The people of Nineveh
used to be as calm as a pool of water,

but now they are running away.

The officials shout, "Stop! Stop!"

But the people will not even look back **as they run away**.

9 **The attackers say to each other,**

"Seize the silver!

Grab the gold!

There is a huge amount **of very valuable things in the city**;

there are many wonderful things of all kinds!"

10 Soldiers have completely looted and destroyed **the city of Nineveh**. The people of Nineveh are afraid, trembling, and deeply sorrowful. Their faces have all become pale **with fear**.

11 **After that happens, people will say,**

"Nineveh used to be full of great and powerful people!

It was like a den full of lions,

where the male and female lions lived with their cubs, where they fed the young ones, where the inhabitants were afraid of nothing.

12 The officials in Nineveh were like lions that killed animals for their cubs, strangled others for their lionesses, and kept killing more to fill their dens with prey." **13** Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh,

"I am your enemy;

I will burn up your chariots.

I will cause soldiers to kill your young men.

I will make sure that your soldiers will never again conquer other nations and seize their valuable possessions.

Your messengers will never again disturb the people of other nations."

3 **1** Terrible things will happen to Nineveh,

that city that is full of people who continually murder **people** and lie **to others** and steal **valuable things from people in other countries**.

Their armies constantly bring to the city the people and things that they have

2 stolen. **But now listen as the enemy soldiers come to attack Nineveh!** Listen to them cracking their whips, and listen to the rattle of their **chariot** wheels!

3 Listen to their galloping horses and their chariots as they bounce along! Look at their flashing swords and glittering spears as the horsemen race forward!

The enemy soldiers will kill many people of Nineveh.

There will be piles of corpses, so many dead bodies that people will stumble over
4 them. All of that will happen because Nineveh is like a beautiful prostitute
who attracts many men and destroys them,
and who practices witchcraft.
The people of Nineveh teach people of other nations to worship Nineveh's idols.
They control other people through witchcraft
and cause them to become their slaves.
5 So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh:
"I am your enemy, and I will completely humiliate you
in the sight of the people of other nations,
just as people humiliate a woman who has committed adultery
by lifting her skirt over her head so that people can see her naked body.
People of other nations will be ashamed of you.
6 It will be as though I am throwing garbage on you;
I will show others that I despise you very much,
and I will cause everyone to publicly ridicule you.
7 All those who see you will run away from you and say,
'Nineveh lies in ruins,
but absolutely no one will mourn for it.'
People of Nineveh, no one will want to comfort you."
8 Nineveh is not stronger than the city of Thebes was.
Thebes was an important city beside the Nile River;
deep water protected Thebes on all sides.
9 The rulers of Cush and Egypt helped Thebes; together they were very strong.
The governments of the nearby countries of Put and Libya
were also allies of Thebes.
10 Nevertheless, enemies conquered Thebes
and took its people as captives.
The enemies smashed the babies of Thebes to death in the streets.
The enemies used marked stones to choose

which officials they would take as slaves.

The enemies led all of the leaders of Thebes away in chains.

11 You people of Nineveh will similarly become confused.

You will search for places to hide

from your enemies as they did.

12 When people want to eat the first figs, all they have to do is shake the fig tree and the figs fall into their mouths.

Your enemies will capture your fortresses that quickly and easily.

13 Look at your soldiers!

They are as weak as women!

The gates of your cities will be wide open

to allow your enemies to enter them,

and your enemies will burn the beams **of those gates**.

14 **People of Nineveh,** store up water now to use when your enemies surround the city!

Make your defensive buildings stronger!

Dig up clay and trample it **to make it soft**;

put it into molds to make bricks **to strengthen the walls**!

15 Nevertheless, your enemies will burn your city;

they will kill you with their swords;

they will kill you as locusts destroy crops.

16 Increase your population like grasshoppers and swarms of locusts! In your city there are now very many merchants;

almost more than one could count.

But **when your city is being destroyed,**

they will take all the valuable things and quickly leave,

like locusts that strip the leaves from plants and then fly away.

17 Your leaders are also like a swarm of locusts

that crowd together on the stone walls on a cold day.

When the sun shines, they fly away,

and no one knows where they have gone.

18 King of Assyria, all of your important people will die.

Your people will scatter to many different places in the mountains,

19 and there will be no one to gather them together. Nothing can help you now.

You are like someone who has a fatal wound.

All of those who hear about what has happened to you will **joyfully** clap their hands about it.

They will do this because all of them have suffered from your continual evil actions.

Habakkuk

1 **1** I am Habakkuk the prophet. This is the message that Yahweh gave me in a vision.

2 I said, “Yahweh, how long must I keep praying to you for help
before you respond?
I ask you to rescue us from people who are acting violently everywhere,
but you do not rescue us!
3 Why do you make me keep seeing people doing evil?
Why do you not punish people who are doing what is wrong?
I see people destroying things and acting violently,
and there is fighting and quarreling everywhere.
4 No one obeys your instruction,
and judges never decide cases fairly.
Wicked people always defeat righteous people in the courts,
so that no one ever gets justice.”
5 Yahweh replied to me, “Look at the completely amazing thing happening among the other nations;
you will be astounded,
because I am doing something during this time that you would not believe
even if someone told you about it.
6 I am making the Chaldeans powerful; they are fierce and swift soldiers.
They will march across the entire earth
and conquer countries that do not belong to them.
7 They are terrifying people
who do whatever they want
and pay no attention to the laws of other countries.
8 Their horses are faster than leopards
and fiercer than wolves at night.

Their horsemen gallop swiftly from distant places;
they swoop down like eagles rushing to kill their prey.
9 They all advance with the purpose of acting violently.
They advance like a desert wind,
gathering prisoners as numerous as grains of sand.
10 They mock the kings and rulers of other countries
and laugh at all the cities with high walls.
They pile up dirt against those walls
and climb up to capture those cities.
11 They rush past like the wind and move on.
But they are very guilty,
because they think that their own military power is their god.”
12 Then I said, “Yahweh, you have always been God from ancient times.
You are my Holy One; we will not die.
You have appointed the Chaldeans to judge us and punish us.
You are our Rock, and you have sent them to correct us.
13 You are pure, and you cannot endure seeing evil,
so why are you tolerating treacherous people?
Why do you say nothing
when wicked people destroy people who are more righteous than they are?
14 You treat us like fish in the sea
or like other sea creatures that have no one to rule over them.
15 The soldiers of Chaldea treat us like fish; they pull us out with hooks
or catch us in their nets,
and they rejoice and celebrate.
16 They worship the weapons with which they capture people and offer sacrifices to them
and burn incense in front of them. They say, ‘Those weapons have enabled us to become rich and eat expensive food.’
17 Will you allow them to keep conquering people?

Will you allow them to keep destroying people of other nations without
showing any mercy?”

2 **1** After I said that, I said to myself, “I will climb up into my guard post,
and stand there in my watchtower.
I will wait there to find out what Yahweh will say,
to know how I should answer.”

2 Then Yahweh replied to me,

“Write plainly on tablets what I am revealing to you in this vision,
and then read it to a messenger
so he can run with it to tell it to other people.

3 In this vision I will talk about things that will happen when I decide.
They will certainly happen in the future, I do not lie.
You want those things to happen immediately, but they are not happening.
But wait patiently for them to happen!
When they occur, they will occur quickly,
and not slowly.

4 Think about the people in that proud nation!
They are certainly not doing what is righteous.
But people who are righteous will live
because they faithfully do what I want them to do.

5 Drunk armies are foolish,
they cannot stop pillaging.
No matter how much they kill and steal, they want more.
They will conquer every people group they encounter.

6 But soon all those whom they have captured will ridicule the soldiers from
Babylonia!
They will make fun of them, saying,
‘Terrible things will happen to you who have stolen things from other
countries!

You got many things by forcing people to give them to you.
But you certainly will not keep those things for long!’
7 Suddenly those you owe a debt to because you pillaged them will come to pillage you.
You will be afraid.
They will recapture all the things that you stole from them.
8 You stole things from the people of many nations.
You murdered people of many people groups,
and you destroyed their land and their cities.
So those who are still alive will steal valuable things from you.
9 Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia who build big houses
with money that you got by forcing others to give it to you.
You are proud, and you think that your houses will be safe
because you have built them in places where you can easily defend them.
10 But because you have destroyed others,
you have harmed yourself and disgraced your own family!
11 The very stones in the walls of your houses
and the wooden beams in your ceilings show that you did evil things to get them
12 Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia who kill people in order to build cities,
cities that you build by using money that you have gotten by committing crimes.
13 But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has declared that fire will destroy everything built by people who do things like that;
they will have worked hard uselessly.
14 But in contrast, just as water fills the oceans,
Yahweh will fill the earth with people who know how glorious he is.
15 Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia,
who cause people who live in nearby countries to become drunk.
You force them to drink a lot of drugged wine

until they are drunk and then they walk around naked
because you are happy when you see that.
16 But you are the ones whom Yahweh will soon disgrace instead of honor.
Yahweh will make you drink so much wine that you will also stagger around drunk and naked.
Yahweh will powerfully judge and curse you,
and everyone will see that you are weak and not strong.
17 You did violent things to the people in Lebanon,
and you killed the wild animals there,
so you will be punished severely for doing that.
You have killed many people
and you have destroyed their lands and their cities.
18 An idol that someone carves or casts from metal does not help anyone at all;
it only deceives the people who trust it.
The person who makes an idol trusts something that he himself created,
19 something that cannot even speak! Terrible things will happen to you who say to lifeless idols that are made of wood or rock,
‘Wake up!’
Stone idols certainly cannot tell you what you should do;
they look nice because they are covered with silver and gold,
but they are not alive.
20 But Yahweh is in his holy temple;
everyone on the earth should be silent in his presence!”

3 1 Habakkuk the prophet prayed this prayer, set to the tune called Shigyonoth.

2 Yahweh, I have heard reports about what you have done,
and I am in awe of all you have done.
Do again in our time what you did long ago!
Even when you are angry with us,
act mercifully toward us!

3 God came from Teman,
and the Holy One came from Mount Paran.
His glory covered the sky,
and praise for him filled the whole earth.
4 He shone like the sunrise;
his rays of light flashed from his hands,
and that is where he conceals his awesome power.
5 Sickness went ahead of him like a soldier,
and burning disease followed behind him.
6 He stopped and surveyed the earth.
He looked at the nations and made them tremble.
The mountains that have existed from the beginning of time collapsed;
the ancient hills crumbled.
He has always existed and always will.
7 I saw that the people in the tents of Cushan were distressed,
and the people of Midian were trembling like tent curtains.

8 Yahweh, were you angry at the rivers and streams?
Were you furious at the sea?
No! You rode on your horses and on your chariots
to defeat your enemies and rescue your people.
9 You took your bow out of its cover, ready to shoot.
You made ready your arrows, just as you had promised.
You split the ground, and water gushed out in rivers.
10 The mountains trembled when they saw you.
A great flood of water rushed past.
The ocean depths roared loudly
and seemed to raise their hands high in the air.
11 The sun and the moon stopped moving
as your arrows flew through the sky like flashes of light
and your shining spear gleamed brightly.

12 You marched across the land in your anger,
and you trampled the nations in your fury.
13 You went out to rescue your people,
to save the king you had chosen.
You crushed the ruler of the wicked people,
destroying his power from his crown to his very foundation.
14 With the enemy's own spear you killed their leader,
who had come rushing like a whirlwind to scatter us
and gloated like they were about to devour helpless people in hiding.
15 You smashed through the sea on your horses,
churning through the great surging waves.

16 When I heard this, my stomach churned inside me;
at the sound of it, my lips trembled.
My bones felt like they were rotting,
and my legs gave way beneath me.
However, I will wait quietly for the time when disaster
comes to the people who are attacking us.
17 The fig trees may not blossom,
and there may be no grapes on the vines.
The olive trees may produce nothing,
and the fields may yield no crops.
The flocks of sheep and goats may disappear from the pastures,
and there may be no cattle in the stalls.
18 Even so, I will rejoice because I know Yahweh.
I will be joyful because Yahweh is the God who saves me.
19 Yahweh the Lord makes me strong.
He makes me as sure-footed as a deer
and enables me to go safely to the high places.

(This is for the choir director to use when the people sing this prayer with stringed instruments.)

Zephaniah

1 **1** These are the messages that Yahweh spoke through Zephaniah during the time when Josiah, the son of Amon, was the king of Judah. Zephaniah was the son of Cushi. Cushi was the son of Gedaliah. Gedaliah was the son of Amariah. And Amariah was the son of King Hezekiah.

2 Yahweh says,

"I will completely destroy creatures all over the earth."

3 Yahweh says,

"I am going to destroy the people and animals that live on the earth.

I am going to destroy the birds that fly in the sky and the fish that swim in the sea.

I am going to destroy the idols that represent false gods,

and I am going to destroy the people who worship those idols.

I will do this so that there will not be wicked people on the earth.

4 I am going to punish the people who live in the city of Jerusalem and in other places in the kingdom of Judah.

I am going to destroy everything in Jerusalem that is related to the worship of the false god Baal.

No one will even remember that there used to be priests of Baal in Jerusalem.

And no one will remember the priests descended from Aaron who helped people worship Baal.

5 I am going to punish the people who have been going up onto the flat roofs of their houses

in order to worship the sun, moon, and stars.

I am also going to punish the people who claim to worship me

but who swear oaths in the name of the false god Milcom.

6 Finally, I am also going to punish the people who used to worship me but no longer do.

I am going to punish the people who no longer ask for my help or ask me to
tell them what they should do."

7 Yahweh is the God whom you should worship.
Soon he will judge and punish people,
so show your respect for him by keeping quiet.
Be respectful, because Yahweh is getting ready to destroy the people of Judah.
He has decided to allow the enemies of Judah to come and destroy them.

8 Yahweh says, "At the time when I destroy the people of Judah,
I will punish their officials and the king's sons
and all those who worship foreign gods.

9 At that time, I will punish all the officials who force their way into people's
homes
and take away what they own in order to make themselves rich."

10 Yahweh also says, "At the time when I destroy the kingdom of Judah,
people will cry out in distress at the Fish Gate of Jerusalem.
People will wail with sorrow in the Second Quarter of the city.
People will hear a loud crash of buildings collapsing in the towns on the hills
that surround the city.

11 Your enemies are going to slaughter all those who buy and sell goods for money,
so all you people who live in the market area of Jerusalem should wail.

12 At that time, it will be as if I light lanterns and search even in the darkest places
in Jerusalem
to find wicked people and punish them.
I am going to punish the people who do not even care that they are doing wicked
things.
They wrongly think that I, Yahweh, do not make people experience the
consequences of their actions.

13 So an enemy army is going to come and destroy their houses completely.
Then that army will carry away their valuable possessions.

This will fulfill what I told the Israelites would happen if they disobeyed me:

'The people will build houses,

but they will not live in them.

They will plant vineyards,

but they will not be able to make wine from the grapes and drink it.'

14 It will soon be the terrible time when I, Yahweh, destroy the people who have sinned against me.

Yes, I am going to do that very soon.

The people of Judah will cry out in sorrow at that time.

Then even the strong soldiers who are trying to defend them will wail in despair.

15 That will be a time when I, Yahweh, show that I am very angry.

It will be a time when people experience much trouble.

At that time, an enemy army will destroy many things.

It will be a very sad time.

People will feel the way they do when black clouds cover the sky.

16 It will be a time when soldiers blow ram's horns and shout to call other soldiers to come and fight.

Your enemies will tear down the walls around your cities

and the high towers at the corners of those walls.

17 Because you have sinned against me, Yahweh,

I am going to cause you people of Judah to suffer greatly.

As I told the Israelites would happen if they sinned against me,

'You will wander around, not knowing where to go, as if you were blind.'

Your enemies will stab you with their weapons

so that your blood and your insides pour out in great quantities.

18 At the time when I, Yahweh, show how angry I am with you,

you will not be able to save yourselves by giving silver or gold to your enemies."

Because Yahweh is very angry that people have worshiped false gods,

he is going to destroy wicked people all over the world.

Indeed, he is soon going to destroy wicked people no matter where they live in the world.

2

1 You people of Judah ought to be ashamed of your sins!
You should certainly gather together and ask Yahweh to be merciful to you.
2 Gather together and pray for mercy
before Yahweh punishes you as he has said he will.
Otherwise he will destroy you completely,
just as the wind blows chaff away entirely.
Yahweh is very angry with you,
3 and if you do not repent, he will punish you. All of you people in Judah who are willing to humble yourselves,
worship Yahweh and obey what he has commanded.
Try to do what is right
and make sure that you stay humble.
If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will protect you
when he punishes other people for their sins.
4 When Yahweh punishes the Philistines,
the cities of Gaza and Ashkelon will lose all of their inhabitants.
An army will attack the city of Ashdod in broad daylight and drive away all of its people.
An army will also drive away the people of the city of Ekron.
5 Terrible things will happen to you Philistine people! You live near the sea.
Yahweh has said that he will punish you Philistines who live in that part of the land of Canaan.
He will punish you until everyone who used to live there is dead.
6 There will no longer be any cities in the seaside land of Philistia.
There will only be grass.
Shepherds will keep their sheep there so that they can eat the grass.
7 The Judean people who survive will go and live in that land.
They will graze their sheep in those pastures.
They will move into the houses that the Philistines have abandoned in the city of Ashkelon.

This will happen because those Judeans will worship Yahweh once again as their God.

Yahweh will take care of them and make them prosperous again.

8-9 Yahweh is the commander of the heavenly armies and the God of the Israelites. He says this:

"I have heard the people of Moab and Ammon insult my people.

I have seen them stealing territory from my people. So now I swear that I am going to destroy Moab and Ammon

as completely as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Crops will no longer grow on their land, only weeds.

The only way people will be able to make a living from that land will be to dig in the ground to get salt from the salt deposits there.

No one will ever rebuild the buildings that were there.

My people who survive will take away all the valuable possessions that once belonged to the Moabites and Ammonites.

Those people will be the ones who own that land."

10 The people of Moab and Ammon will get what they deserve for having been so proud.

They should not have insulted the people who belong to Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies.

They should not have tried to take away their land.

11 The people of Moab and Ammon will be greatly afraid when Yahweh punishes them.

He will do that so powerfully that people will stop worshiping all other gods.

People in every nation will worship Yahweh instead.

Each person will do that in his own country.

12 Yahweh has also said that he will slaughter the people of Ethiopia.

13 Yahweh will also punish and destroy the people of Assyria.

They live in a land that is northeast of us.

He will cause an enemy army to destroy their capital city of Nineveh.

It will become a place where no plants grow, like the desert.

14 Groups of many different kinds of wild animals will live where Nineveh used to
be.

Various kinds of owls will make their nests on top of the columns of its
destroyed buildings.

Those owls will sometimes perch on the sills of empty windows and hoot.

Rubble will block the doorways.

Rain and sunlight will ruin the valuable cedar wood that the Assyrians used
to build their buildings.

15 The people of Nineveh used to be proud.

They thought that no other country could conquer them.

They said to each other,

"Our city is the greatest city!

No other city is as great as ours!"

But an enemy army will completely destroy Nineveh.

It will become a place where wild animals make their dens.

People who go by that area will often make hissing sounds

and shake their fists to show how much they hated that city.

3 **1** The people who live in the city of Jerusalem have rebelled against Yahweh.

They have committed terrible sins, and this has made them unacceptable to
Yahweh.

They have treated others violently.

As a result, terrible things are going to happen to them!

2 The people of Jerusalem have not paid attention to the prophets whom Yahweh
has sent to correct them.

The people in Jerusalem do not believe in Yahweh, their God, and they do
not worship him.

3 The leaders of the city treat its people violently,

like lions that roar as they attack their prey.

Their judges are greedy. They are like wolves that have not eaten all day and so
devour an entire animal that they kill.

4 The prophets in Jerusalem say what they think people want to hear.

They do not honestly give the people messages from Yahweh.
The priests in Jerusalem do things that the law of Moses forbids.
As a result, they have made the temple there unholy.
5 But Yahweh is still in the city, and he always does what is right.
He treats people justly, day after day, without fail.
Still, wicked people are not ashamed **when they do what is wrong**.

6 So Yahweh says this:

"I have destroyed many nations.
I have destroyed their strong city walls and towers.
I have destroyed the streets in those cities. No one walks on them anymore.
Those cities are in ruins. All the people who used to live in them are now dead.
7 I said to myself,
'The people of Jerusalem will certainly honor me
and allow me to correct them.
If they do that, I will not destroy their city. I will not do all the things that I said I would do to them.'
But even though the people of Jerusalem knew that I had punished other nations,
they eagerly did even more wrong things."
8 So this is what Yahweh declares:
"You can confidently expect that an enemy army is going to conquer you and take away your possessions.
I have decided to judge all of the people groups on the earth at the same time.
I am going to punish them severely because I am very angry with them for being so wicked.
Because I am very angry that people have worshiped false gods, I am going to destroy wicked people all over the world.
9 But after that, I will make the people groups
do what is right and say what is right.
That way all of them will worship me, Yahweh.

I will be the only God whom any of them worship.

10 Enemy armies will take some of the people who worship me away to other countries.

They will take them as far away as the place where the Nile River begins.

But even from that far away,

my people will come back to Jerusalem, bringing offerings to me.

11 When I restore you, you will no longer feel shame

for disobeying me and doing many wrong things.

Many of you boasted about how great you thought you were.

But I will punish those people,

and then you will always come humbly to worship me in my temple.

12 Then the people who live in Jerusalem will be poor, but they will be humble.

They will depend on me, Yahweh, to help them.

13 Then the people of Israel who survive will not do wicked things.

They will not tell lies or say things to deceive others.

They will not be afraid that an enemy army will conquer them,

so they will be able to eat and sleep peacefully."

14 You Israelites who live in Judah

should sing and shout loudly!

You people who live in Jerusalem should celebrate because you are feeling very happy!

15 **You should celebrate because** Yahweh is not going to punish you any more.

He is going to keep enemy armies far away from you!

Yahweh himself, who is the true king of you Israelites, is going to live among you.

You will never be afraid again that others will harm you.

16 At that time, prophets will say to the people who live in Jerusalem,

"You people who live on Mount Zion should not be afraid!

No, you should not become discouraged.

17 Yahweh your God lives among you!

He is mighty, and he will protect you.

He will be very happy about you.

He will not say anything harsh to you, and you will know how much he loves you.

He will sing loudly to rejoice about you."

18 Yahweh says, "Enemy armies took some of you Judeans away from your homeland.

Those people became very sad because they could no longer gather with others to worship me.

They felt shame because of what had happened to them.

But I am going to bring them back to Judah.

19 You can be certain that I will severely punish all those who oppressed you.

When I do that, I will rescue those who had to make a long journey to go and live in other countries.

They felt shame when they had to do that.

But now I will make the people of those countries praise and honor them.

20 When I act to help you, I will gather you together and bring you back home to Israel.

Then I will cause all the people groups in the world to praise and honor you greatly.

You will be able to see that I am making you rich again."

This is what Yahweh has promised!

Haggai

1 **1** The prophet Haggai received a message from Yahweh in the second year after Darius had become king of Persia. Haggai received this message on the first day of the sixth month of that year. He told it to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel. Haggai also told the message to the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak. He said, **2** "Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says this: 'The people of Judah are saying that it is not yet the right time for them to rebuild my temple.'" **3** Yahweh then told the prophet Haggai to tell the people this: **4** "It is not right for you to live in comfortable houses while you have still not repaired Yahweh's temple! **5** So this is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you: 'Think about what you are doing!

6 You are planting many seeds, but you are not harvesting many crops.
You eat food, but you never get enough to eat.
You drink wine, but you never get enough to satisfy you.
You still have clothes to wear, but they are so worn-out that they no longer keep you warm.

7 You earn money, but it is not enough to pay your expenses.' So this is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you: 'Think about what you should do differently! **8** Go up into the hills and cut down trees! Bring the timber from them here to Jerusalem and rebuild my temple! This will honor me, and I will be proud of my temple again.' That is what Yahweh is telling you. **9** Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is also telling you, 'There is a reason why you have not grown many crops even though you have planted many seeds. The reason is that I kept the crops from growing. I did that because you have built comfortable homes for yourselves, but you have not repaired my temple. **10** Because you were not repairing my temple, I kept the crops from growing by making it so dry that no rain fell from the sky and there was not even any moisture on the ground in the mornings. **11** I have kept the plants from growing in the fields and on the mountains. I have kept your wheat and barley

from growing. I have kept your vines from producing grapes. I have kept your olive trees from producing olives. Even though you worked very hard, you were not able to grow enough food. As a result, both people and animals have not had enough to eat.'" **12** **The governor of Judah,** Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, knew that Yahweh their God had told the prophet Haggai to speak this message. The high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, also knew this. The rest of the people who had returned to Judah from exile in Babylon also knew this. And they all respected Yahweh. So they all obeyed the message that Yahweh their God had spoken. **13** **Yahweh was pleased that the people had obeyed him. So** Yahweh gave Haggai, his messenger, another message to speak to the people. Haggai said, "Yahweh is telling you, 'I am with you!'" **14** This message from Yahweh made the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, want to rebuild the temple. It also made the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, want to rebuild the temple. It also made the rest of the people want to rebuild the temple. So they all gathered together and started rebuilding the temple of Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, their God. **15** They started the work on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year that Darius was king of Persia.

2 **1** Yahweh gave another message to the prophet Haggai on the twenty-first day of the seventh month **of Darius' second year as king of Persia**. Yahweh told Haggai, **2** "I want you to ask a question to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, and to the rest of the people. Ask them, **3** 'Is there still anyone among you who remembers how glorious the temple used to look? If so, do you think that the temple looks glorious now? You must agree that it does not look very glorious at all.'" **4** **But after Haggai had asked those questions, he said,** "Yahweh is telling you, Zerubbabel, 'Now do not be discouraged!' Yahweh is also telling you high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, and all the Jewish people, 'Do not be discouraged!' Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you, 'Repair the temple, because I am with you **to help you**! **5** That is what I promised your ancestors when I brought them out of slavery in Egypt and made a covenant with them. **And I am still keeping that promise now, since** my Spirit is living among you. So do not be afraid **of the people who are trying to keep you from rebuilding my temple**!' **6** Do not be

afraid, because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you, ‘Soon it will be as if I am shaking the sky and the earth, the sea and the land. **7** It will seem that way because I will be making the other nations respect you. Then those people will bring their treasures to this temple, and I will make it very glorious again.’ That is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you. **8** Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, ‘The silver and gold that the people of other nations have really belong to me.’ **9** Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, ‘The temple will be even more glorious in the future than it was in the past.’ Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, also says, ‘I will protect the temple from people who would want to destroy it.’” **10** Yahweh spoke another message to the prophet Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of Darius’ second year as king of Persia. Yahweh told Haggai, **11** “This is what I, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, am telling you to do. Ask the priests a question about what Moses directed in his instructions. Say, **12** ‘Suppose a priest takes **from the altar** some meat that a person has offered to Yahweh. And suppose the priest carries the meat within his robe. If his robe touches some bread or stew or wine or olive oil or any other food, does that food become like food that someone has offered to Yahweh?’” When Haggai asked the priests this question, they replied, “No, it does not.” **13** Then Haggai asked the priests this question: “Suppose someone becomes unclean by touching a dead body. If this unclean person then touches any food, does that food also become unclean?” The priests replied, “Yes, that food does become unclean.” **14** Then Haggai said, “Yahweh is telling you this: ‘I consider you Jewish people to be unclean as well! And since you are unclean, the crops that you grow and the animals that you raise are also unclean. And so you cannot offer those unclean crops or the unclean meat from those animals on the altar at the temple. **15** So now think about what has been happening to you during this whole time that you have not been rebuilding my temple. **16** During that time, when you thought you could take 20 measures of grain from a heap, you found that there were only 10 measures in the heap. When you thought you could draw 50 measures of wine out of a wine vat, you found that there were only 20 measures in the vat. **17** I caused blight, mildew, and hail to destroy all the crops that you worked so hard to raise. Even so, you did not do what I wanted you to do and rebuild my temple.’ This is what Yahweh is saying to you. **18** Think about what has been happening to you during the whole time between when you laid the foundation of my temple **when you first returned from exile** until this day, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Yes, think about that! **19** You have no grain left in your barns. Your grapevines have

not been producing grapes. Your fig trees have not been producing figs. Your pomegranate trees have not been producing pomegranates. Your olive trees have not been producing olives. But from now on, I will bless you **with an abundance of crops**!" **20** Yahweh then gave a second message to Haggai on that same day. He said, **21** "Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, this for me: 'It is going to be as if I am shaking the sky and the earth. **22** It will seem that way because I am going to stop kingdoms from ruling over other kingdoms. I am going to make strong nations weak. I am going to do this by making the nations fight wars against each other. When they do, they will completely destroy one another's armies.' **23** Tell Zerubbabel for me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, 'After I destroy the armies of the other kingdoms, I am going to make you powerful, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant.' Tell him for me, Yahweh, 'Just as a king seals his orders with a signet ring, so I will use you to accomplish my purposes.' Tell him for me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, 'I am going to do this because I have chosen you!'"

Zechariah

1 **1** I am Zechariah, a prophet, the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo. When Darius had been the emperor of Persia for almost two years, in the eighth month of that year, Yahweh gave me this message:

2 "Yahweh was very angry with your ancestors. **3** So tell the people this: 'Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, "Come back to me"—this is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, solemnly declares—"and I will help you again, says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. **4** Do not be like your ancestors. The prophets who lived before you continually told your ancestors that Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, said, 'Stop doing the evil things that you are doing!' However, they refused to listen to me or pay attention to me," solemnly declares Yahweh. **5** "Your ancestors have all died. The prophets also did not live forever. **6** However, the warnings and decrees that I commanded my servants the prophets to tell your ancestors did come true. So your ancestors repented and said, 'Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, has punished us for the way we behaved and for the things we did, just as he said he would do.'"""

7 Three months later, on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, when Darius had been emperor for almost two years, Yahweh gave another message to me, Zechariah the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo, the prophet. **8** During the night I had a vision. In the vision I saw a man riding a red horse. He stood among the myrtle trees in a deep valley, and behind him other riders sat on red, reddish-brown, and white horses. **9** I asked the angel who had been talking to me, "Sir, who are those riders?" The angel replied, "I will show you who they are." **10** Then the man who stood among the myrtle trees explained. He said, "Yahweh sent these riders to patrol throughout the earth."

11 Then those riders reported to an angel representing Yahweh, who stood among the myrtle trees. They said, "We have patrolled throughout the earth, and everywhere the nations are living peacefully and undisturbed."

12 Then the angel representing Yahweh pleaded, “Yahweh, commander of the heavenly armies, how long will you continue to not show mercy to the people of Jerusalem and the people of the other cities of Judah? You have been angry with them for 70 years!” 13 So Yahweh spoke kind and encouraging words to the angel who had been talking to me. 14 Then the angel who had been talking to me said to me, “Proclaim this message: ‘Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, “I care very deeply about the people of Jerusalem and of Zion. 15 I am extremely angry with the nations that feel so secure. I was only a little angry with my people, but those nations made things much worse by harming them so much.”

16 Therefore, this is what Yahweh says, “I have once again chosen to show mercy to the people of Jerusalem. They will rebuild my temple there,” solemnly declares Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, “and workers will stretch out a measuring line to rebuild Jerusalem.” 17 Therefore, this is what Yahweh says, “I have once again chosen to show mercy to the people of Jerusalem. They will rebuild my temple there,” solemnly declares Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, “and workers will stretch out a measuring line to rebuild Jerusalem.”

18 Then I looked up and in front of me I saw four horns. 19 I asked the angel who had been talking to me, “What are those?” He replied, “Those horns represent the powerful nations that used their military power to scatter the people of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.” 20 Then Yahweh showed me four craftsmen. 21 I asked, “What are these craftsmen coming to do?” He replied, “Those horns represent the powerful nations that scattered the people of Judah so badly that no one could resist them. These craftsmen have come to terrify those nations and to crush the military power that those nations used against the people of Judah to scatter them.”

2 1 Then I looked up and saw a man who was holding a measuring line. 2 I asked him, “Where are you going?” He replied, “I am going to measure Jerusalem to find out how wide it is and how long it is.”

3 Then the angel who had been talking to me went out, and another angel came out to meet him. 4 The second angel said to him, “Run and tell that young man this: ‘Someday so many people and animals will live in Jerusalem that they will not all fit inside the city walls. Many of them will live outside the walls. 5 Yahweh says that he himself will protect the city all around,

just as a wall of fire would protect it, and he will show everyone how great he is by living among his people in the city.'"

6 Yahweh declares, "Pay attention! You must flee from Babylonia, because I scattered you in every direction."

7 Yahweh says, "You people of Jerusalem who are still living in Babylon, escape from there! **8** This is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says. In order to honor his people, he sent me to rebuke the nations that took away your valuable possessions. He says, 'Anyone who harms you harms what is most precious to me. **9** I am about to use my power against those nations, and the people who used to serve them will take back their possessions from them.'" When that happens, you will know that Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, sent me.

10 Yahweh says, "You people of Jerusalem, shout and be happy, because I am about to come to you and live among you!"

11 At that time, people from many nations will start worshiping Yahweh and become his people. He will live among all of you. Then you will know that Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, sent me to you. **12** Yahweh will claim the people of Judah as his own special people in the land that he has set apart for himself, and he will once again choose Jerusalem as his city. **13** All people everywhere must be silent before Yahweh, because he has risen up from heaven, the holy place where he lives, and he is ready to act!

3 **1** Then Yahweh showed me a vision. I saw Joshua, the high priest, standing in the presence of an angel representing Yahweh. The accuser was standing at the place where an accuser stands in a court, ready to bring charges against Joshua. **2** Yahweh said to the accuser, "I, Yahweh, reject your accusations! I am the one who has chosen Jerusalem, and I reject your accusations! I rescued this man just barely, the way someone pulls a burning stick out of a fire before the fire destroys it." **3** Now Joshua was wearing extremely dirty clothes as he stood near the angel.

4 The angel told the other angels who were standing there, "Take those filthy clothes off of him." Then the angel said to Joshua, "Look at what I have done! I have taken away your sin,

and I will dress you in beautiful clothes." [5] Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head too!" So the angels put a clean turban on his head and dressed him in new clothes while an angel representing Yahweh stood watching.

[6] Then an angel representing Yahweh gave Joshua this serious command: [7] "Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says this to you, 'If you obey me and do what I command you to do, then you will be in charge of my temple and will take care of my temple courtyards. I will also allow you to come into the presence of these angels who stand here. [8] Listen carefully, Joshua the high priest, you and your fellow priests who sit in front of you, because you are all living signs that point to what will happen in the future. I am going to bring my servant, the one who will be like a new branch that sprouts from the stump of David's family. [9] Look at the stone that I have placed in front of Joshua. That single stone has seven facets that represent how I watch over everything. I will engrave an inscription on it. This is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, declares. When I do this, I will take away all the sin from this land in a single day.

[10] When that day comes, each of you will invite your neighbors to come and enjoy peace and security with you.' This is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, declares."

4 [1] Then the angel who had been talking with me came back and woke me up. I had been thinking deeply, as though I had fallen asleep. [2] He asked me, "What do you see?" I replied, "I see a lampstand made completely of gold. It has a small bowl for olive oil at the top, and seven lamps around the bowl, with seven channels going to each of the seven lamps that are on top of it. [3] I also see two olive trees beside it, one olive tree on the right side of the bowl and one olive tree on its left side."

[4] I asked the angel who was talking with me, "Sir, what do these things mean?"

[5] The angel replied, "You really should know what they mean!" I answered, "No, sir, I do not know."

[6] Then the angel said to me, "This is the message that Yahweh has for Zerubbabel, 'You will not accomplish this by being strong or by your own efforts. Instead, my Spirit will

accomplish it,' says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. 7 Every great difficulty that stands in front of Zerubbabel will disappear! He will set the final stone of the temple in its place, and all the people will shout, 'How beautiful! May God bless it!'

8 Then Yahweh gave me another message. 9 He said, 'Zerubbabel began the work of rebuilding this temple, and he will finish it.' When that happens, you will know that Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, sent me to you people.

10 No one should think that the small beginnings of a big project are unimportant. People will be happy when they see Zerubbabel holding the plumb line as he checks the walls. Those seven lamps represent how Yahweh watches over everything that happens on the whole earth."

11 Then I asked the angel, "What do the two olive trees on each side of the lampstand mean?

12 In particular, what do the two olive branches that are beside the two gold pipes that pour out olive oil mean?" 13 He said to me, "You really should know what these things mean!" I replied, "No, sir, I do not know."

14 So he said, "They represent the two people whom God has anointed to serve the Lord who rules over the whole earth."

5 1 I looked up again and saw a scroll flying through the air.

2 The angel asked me, "What do you see?" I replied, "I see a scroll flying through the air. It is about 30 feet long and about 15 feet wide."

3 Then he said to me, "This scroll contains the words that Yahweh speaks to punish people throughout the whole land. On one side, the scroll says that Yahweh will remove everyone who steals. On the other side, it says that he will remove everyone who lies when making a solemn promise. 4 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, declares, 'I will send this scroll to the houses of people who steal and to the houses of people who use my authority to make false promises. The scroll will remain in those houses and will destroy them completely, including all their wooden beams and stones.'"

5 Then the angel who had been talking to me came closer and said, “Look up and see what is coming out.”

6 I asked him, “What is it?” He replied, “It is a large measuring basket that is coming out.” Then he said, “It represents what the people are doing throughout the whole land.”

7 Then I saw someone lifting the heavy lead cover off the basket. There was a woman sitting inside the basket! 8 The angel said, “She represents how wicked the people are.” Then the angel threw her back down into the basket and put the heavy lead cover back over the opening.

9 Then I looked up and saw two women coming toward me. The wind was blowing under their wings, and they had large wings like those of a stork. They lifted the basket up high between the ground and the sky.

10 I asked the angel who had been talking to me, “Where are they taking that basket?”

11 He replied, “They are taking it to Babylonia to build a temple for it there. When they finish building the temple, they will place the basket inside on a pedestal.”

The vision of four chariots

6 1 I looked up again, and in the vision I saw four chariots coming toward me from between two bronze mountains. 2 Red horses pulled the first chariot, and black horses pulled the second chariot. 3 White horses pulled the third chariot, and strong, spotted horses pulled the fourth chariot. 4 I asked the angel who had been speaking to me, “Sir, what do those chariots mean?”

5 The angel replied, “These are the four spirits that serve the Lord who rules the entire earth. They go out across the sky in four directions. 6 The chariot with the black horses will go north, the white horses will follow them, and the spotted horses will go south.”

7 When those strong horses went out, they were eager to go and patrol the earth. The angel said to them, “Go, patrol the earth!” So they went and patrolled the earth.

8 Then the angel called out to me, “Look, the chariots that went north have satisfied my anger in the land of the north.”

Yahweh commands Zechariah to crown Joshua

9 Then Yahweh gave me another message. 10 He said, “Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah will bring silver and gold from the people who returned from exile in Babylon. On the day they arrive, go to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. 11 Take some of the silver and gold from those men and make crowns. Then place them on the head of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. 12 Tell him, ‘This is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, There is a man whose title is the Branch, because he will grow up like a new branch from the stump of David’s family. He will emerge from where he is, and he will build the temple of Yahweh. 13 Yes, he will build Yahweh’s temple.

He will receive great honor,
and he will sit on his throne and rule.
He will also serve as a priest while he sits on his throne,
and there will be peace because he is both king and priest.’

14 The crowns will remain in the temple of Yahweh to remind people of what Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen son of Zephaniah did. 15 People who live far away will come and help build Yahweh’s temple. When that happens, you will know that Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, has sent me to you. This will happen if you truly obey what Yahweh your God commands.”

7 1 When Darius had been the emperor for almost four years, on the fourth day of Kislev (which was the ninth month in their calendar), Yahweh gave me another message. 2 The

people of the city of Bethel sent two men, Sharezer and Regem-Melech, along with some other men, to consult with Yahweh [3] by asking the priests at Yahweh's temple and the prophets if they should continue their years-long practice of mourning **the anniversary of the destruction of the temple** by fasting during the fifth month.

[4] Then Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, gave me, Zechariah, a message. [5] He told me to say this to the priests and, in fact, to everyone in the whole land: "Tell me whom you were honoring when you did not eat but went around in dirty clothing. It was not me you honored in the fifth and seventh months these 70 years. [6] And when you feasted at my temple, you did it just to have a good time, not to honor me. [7] This is exactly what I kept telling the former prophets to proclaim to the people, when the people in Jerusalem and the nearby towns were many and prosperous, and when people also lived in the southern Judean wilderness, and in the foothills to the west."

[8] Yahweh gave another message to me: [9] "Tell the people that this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, said **to your ancestors**: 'I told them to do what is just, to act faithfully and mercifully toward each other, in order to honor my covenant with you. [10] I told them not to oppress widows or orphans or foreigners or poor people. I told them not to even think about doing evil to anyone else.'

[11] But the people refused to obey Yahweh. They resisted him. They did not even listen to what he said. [12] He had given these messages for his Spirit to repeat to the prophets in earlier times. The prophets were meant to speak these messages to the people. But the people were very stubborn; they would not listen to the law of Moses or to any message from God. So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, became very angry with them.

[13] In those times, when Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, called to the people, they refused to listen. So he said, 'In exactly the same way, I will refuse to listen when they call to me. [14] I scattered them among many nations, nations that they had never been to before just as a storm scatters leaves. After they were gone, their own land was empty, with no one living

there. No one traveled through it or came back to it, because they have turned it, their most pleasant land, into a wilderness.’”

Yahweh promises to bless Jerusalem

8 **1** Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, gave me another message: **2** This is what I, Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, say, “I love the people of Jerusalem; I love them very much, and I am very angry with their enemies.”

3 So this is what I, Yahweh, say: “Some day I will return to Mount Zion and I will live there. At that time, people will call Jerusalem ‘The City of Faithful People’, and they will call the mountain that Yahweh, the commander of angel armies, possesses ‘The Sacred Mountain.’”

4 Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, also says this: “Some day old men and old women will again sit along the streets of Jerusalem, each of them holding a cane because they are very old. **5** Boys and girls will fill the city streets, playing there.”

6 Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, also says this: “When those things happen, it will seem marvelous to the people who are still alive, but it certainly will not seem marvelous to me!”

7 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, also says this: “Pay attention! I will rescue my people from countries in the east and in the west, wherever they are. **8** I will bring them back, and they will live in Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will be faithful to them and treat them fairly.”

9 Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, also says this: “When people laid the foundation for my temple, there were prophets there who gave messages from me. Some of you people heard what those prophets said. So be brave while you are building the temple, in order that you may finish building it. **10** Before that time, no one could earn any wages for their work, and no one could hire animals for work, because there was no money. No one was safe going about their daily activities because of enemies, since I caused everyone to fight

against one another. **11** But now I will act differently toward you people who are still alive than I did previously." That is what Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, says.

12 "Instead, everything will go well for them: planting time will be peaceful, grapevines will produce grapes, good crops will grow in the fields, and rain will fall from the sky. I will give all these things to the people of this nation who have survived. **13** You people of Judah and Israel, right now, the people of other nations think of you when they say what a curse means. But I will rescue you, and I will give you so many good things that they will think of you when they say what a blessing means. So be brave; work hard to finish building the temple."

14 Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, also says this, "When your ancestors caused me to become very angry, I did not change my mind about that. Instead, I indeed punished them. **15** But now I will do something different. I am planning to do good things to the people of Jerusalem and other towns in Judah again. So do not be afraid. **16** These are the things that you should do: You should always tell the truth to each other. In the courts, your judges must make decisions according to what is correct and fair. **17** Do not plan to do evil things to others, and do not approve of swearing false accusations against others. I hate all those things," says Yahweh.

18 Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, said this to me: **19** "I tell you, the times when you people of Judah abstain from food during the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months of each year will become times when you celebrate pleasant and joyful festivals instead. But you must want to speak truthfully and to be peaceful."

20 Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, also says this, "Some day people from many people groups and foreign cities will come here to Jerusalem. **21** People from one city will go to the people in another city and say, 'Quick! Let us go together to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh and ask him to bless us; we ourselves are going.' **22** And people from many people groups and from powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to ask Yahweh, the commander of angel armies, to bless them, and they will worship him."

23 Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, also says this, "At that time, many people from every people group, speaking their own language, will come and firmly grab the fringe of

robe belonging to a man from Judah's tribe. They will say to him, 'We want to be near you,
because we have heard people say that God is with you.'"

9 **1** This is another message that Yahweh gave to me:
He pays close attention to all people everywhere,
and especially to all the Israelite tribes.
This message is about the region of Hadrach
and the city of Damascus, where he is staying.
2 Hamath also is a nearby city,
as are the cities of Tyre and Sidon,
whose people think that they are very wise.
3 The people of Tyre have built a strong wall around their city,
and they have piled up as much silver and gold
as if it were dust and mud in the streets.
4 But look out! The Lord will take away everything that the people of Tyre own
and destroy their merchant ships out at sea,
and an enemy army will burn their city down.
5 When the people of the city of Ashkelon see that happen, they will be scared.
The people of the city of Gaza will also tremble in great anguish,
and the people of the city of Ekron will tremble too, because they will no
longer expect anything good to happen.
There will no longer be a king ruling in Gaza,
and no one will live in Ashkelon anymore.
6 People of mixed descent will live in the city of Ashdod,
and so I will cause the Philistine people to no longer be proud.
7 I will no longer allow them to eat meat that still has blood in it,
and I will no longer allow them to eat the disgusting food that they offered to
their idols.
Then the Philistine people who survive will worship me and become my people,
like one of the clans in Judah.

The people of the city of Ekron will become my people, just as the people of the city of Jebus did.

8 I will protect my temple like an army that guards it,
so that no enemy soldiers can march through it or come back to attack it.
No one who oppresses my people will ever invade them again,
because now I am watching over my people carefully.

9 You people of Jerusalem, rejoice very much!
Shout joyfully, everyone in Jerusalem!
Look! Your king is coming to you.
He does what is right, and God will give him victory.
He is humble, and he will ride into the city on a donkey,
on a young donkey.

10 I will take away the chariots from the region of Ephraim
and the war horses from the city of Jerusalem,
and I will destroy the bows that soldiers use in war.
Your king will tell the nations that they will now live peacefully.
He will rule over all the earth,
from one sea to the farthest sea,
and from the Euphrates River to the most distant places on the earth.

11 As for you people of Jerusalem,
because of the blood of the animals that the priests killed when I made my covenant with you, I will set your people free,
the ones who suffer like prisoners stuck in a dry pit.

12 You people who are like prisoners but who still confidently expect me to help you,
return to your land, where you will be safe.
Today I am telling you that I will give back to you twice as much as you have lost.

13 I will use the people of Judah to fight for me as a warrior uses a bow,
and I will use the people of Ephraim like the arrows in that bow.

People of Jerusalem, I will stir up your young men to fight against the army of Greece,
and I will make you as powerful as a warrior's sword.

14 Then Yahweh will appear above his people,
and the arrows that he shoots will flash like lightning.
Yahweh my Lord will blow a trumpet to signal the attack,
and he will advance fiercely, like a storm blowing from the south.
15 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, will protect his people.
His soldiers will completely defeat their enemies who attack them with slingstones.
Those soldiers will shout in victory and celebrate as noisily as men who have drunk much wine.
They will be as full of joy as the bowls that the priests fill with blood and pour out on the corners of the altar.
16 On that day, Yahweh, the God his people worship, will rescue them
just as a shepherd rescues his flock of sheep from danger.
They will be as precious to him as sparkling jewels in a crown shining over his land.
17 How wonderful and how beautiful everything will be!
The young men will grow strong from eating plenty of grain,
and the young women will grow strong from drinking plenty of new wine.

10 **1** Ask Yahweh to send rain in the springtime, because he is the one who makes the storm clouds. He gives people showers of rain, and he makes plants grow in their fields. **2** The household idols that people consult tell them worthless things, and those who practice divination see false visions; the dreams they describe are lies, and the comfort they give is empty. So the people wander about helplessly and suffer, because they have no leader to guide and protect them, just as sheep suffer when they have no shepherd.

3 Yahweh says, "I am very angry with the leaders of my people, and I will punish those rulers. I, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, care for my people, the people of Judah, as a shepherd cares for his flock, and I will make them strong, like a splendid warhorse

in battle. **4** All their rulers will come from the tribe of Judah. Some will support the people, as
a cornerstone supports a building; some will hold them together, as a tent peg holds up a tent;
and some will lead them in battle, as a warrior holds his bow in war. Yes, from Judah every
ruler will come. **5** Those rulers and their people will be like mighty warriors who trample their
enemies into the mud of the streets during battle. They will fight and win, because I, Yahweh,
am with them, and they will completely defeat even their most powerful enemies.

6 Because I am Yahweh their God and I pity my people, I will answer them when they pray
to me. I will make the people of Judah strong, and I will rescue the people of Israel. I will bring
them back to their own land. Then it will be like I had never rejected them. **7** The people of
Ephraim will be strong like warriors, and they will be as happy as people who have drunk
wine. Their children will see it and be glad; they will celebrate loudly because of what I,
Yahweh, have done.

8 I will whistle to signal my people, and I will gather them together because I have rescued
them, and they will become as numerous as they were before. **9** Even though I scatter my
people among the nations, they will remember me even in those distant lands. They and their
children will survive, and they will return to their land. **10** I will bring them back from Egypt
in the south and gather them from Assyria in the north. I will bring them to the region of
Gilead and to Lebanon, and there will not be enough room for them all.

11 Even though my people's troubles seem like a terrifying sea, I will bring them safely
home. I will subdue those troubles completely, as if I were striking down the waves of the sea
and drying up the deep waters of the Nile River. I will humble the proud army of Assyria, and I
will take away the royal power of Egypt. **12** I will make my people strong by my power, and
they will live faithfully, honoring my authority. That is what I, Yahweh, declare."

11 **1** Open your gates, people living in Lebanon,
because you will not be able to stop the fire from burning up your cedar
trees!
2 The cypress trees will be like people who are wailing
because the mighty cedar trees have fallen; enemies have destroyed those
magnificent trees!

The oak trees in the region of Bashan will also be like people wailing
because enemies have cut down the trees of their thick forest!
3 Listen to the shepherds crying
because enemies have ruined the rich pastures where they fed their flocks!
Listen to the young lions roaring
because enemies have destroyed the thickets along the Jordan River where they lived!

4 This is what Yahweh my God said to me, “Act as a shepherd for a flock of sheep that
people are about to slaughter. 5 The people who buy the sheep slaughter them, and no one
punishes those buyers. The people who sell the sheep say that they praise Yahweh because they
are becoming rich. Not even the shepherds pity the sheep. 6 That is because I, Yahweh, will no
longer pity the people who live in this land. That is what I, Yahweh, declare. Instead, I will let
everyone’s neighbors and their king dominate them. Those people will devastate this land, and
I will not rescue anyone from their control.”

7 So I became like a shepherd of a flock of sheep that people were about to slaughter. I
took good care of the sheep, especially the weakest ones. Then I took two shepherd’s staffs. I
named one staff “Favor” and the other staff, “Union.” And I took care of the sheep. 8 In one
month I got rid of the three other shepherds.

I became impatient with them, and they also hated me. 9 So I said, “I will no longer be
your shepherd. Let the sheep that are dying die, and let the sheep that are perishing perish. And
let those that remain destroy each other.”

10 Then I took my staff that I had named “Favor,” and I broke it to signify that Yahweh
was canceling the covenant that he had made with all the peoples. 11 So the covenant ended on
that day. Then the afflicted people of the flock who were watching me knew that this was truly
a message from Yahweh. 12 I said to them, “If it seems right to you, pay me my wages; but if
not, do not pay me.” So they weighed out my wages: thirty pieces of silver.

13 Then Yahweh said to me, “Throw that money to the potter! What a pathetic price they
decided to pay for me!” So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the
temple of Yahweh. 14 Then I broke my second staff, the one that I had named “Union,” to

signify that the close family relationship between the people of Judah and the people of Israel would end.

15 Then Yahweh said to me, “Take again the tools that a foolish shepherd uses, 16 because surely I am going to appoint a shepherd over the people in this land, one who will not care for them. He will not help the sheep that are perishing, he will not search for the ones that have strayed, he will not heal the ones that are injured, and he will not feed the healthy ones. Instead, he will eat the meat of the fattest sheep and tear off their hooves.

17 Terrible things will happen to that worthless shepherd
who abandons the flock that he should care for!
Enemies will attack his arm and his right eye with a sword!
As a result, his arm will lose all its strength
and his right eye will become completely blind!”

12 1 This is a message that Yahweh gave concerning Israel. Yahweh, the one who created the sky, who formed the earth, and who breathed life into humanity, solemnly declares this:

2 “Listen! I am about to cause the city of Jerusalem to be like an intoxicating drink that makes all the nations around it stagger helplessly when their armies besiege Jerusalem and the region of Judah. 3 Then every nation on earth will come to attack Jerusalem, but I will make it like a solid rock that will badly hurt everyone that comes to attack it. 4 This is what I, Yahweh, declare: On that day I will cause all the horses of the enemy armies to panic and all their riders to go insane. I will watch over the people of Judah and protect them, but I will cause all the horses of those enemy nations to go blind. 5 Then the leaders of the clans of Judah will say to themselves that the people who live in Jerusalem are strong because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is their God. 6 On that day I will make the leaders of the clans of Judah able to destroy their enemies completely and quickly. They will defeat all the surrounding peoples on every side of them, and the people of Jerusalem will live safely in their own city again.”

7 Yahweh will first rescue the people who live in the villages of Judah, so that the descendants of King David and the people who live in Jerusalem will not consider themselves more important than the rest of the people of Judah. 8 On that day Yahweh will protect the

people who live in Jerusalem. Then even the weakest person among them will fight as powerfully as King David, the great warrior, once did. God will give the descendants of King David such great power that as they lead the people, it will seem as though Yahweh's own angel is going ahead of them.

9 "At that time, I will set out to destroy all the nations that come to attack Jerusalem. 10 I will act very kindly toward the descendants of King David and the people who live in Jerusalem, and I will cause them to plead with me for mercy. They will look to me, the one whom they pierced, and they will mourn for me as strongly as parents mourn for an only son who has died. They will weep many tears for me, as many tears as people weep when a firstborn son dies." 11 On that day the people in Jerusalem will mourn very loudly. They will mourn as loudly as the people did at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo, where they grieved for King Josiah after he died in battle.

12 All the people in the land will mourn, each clan by itself. The clan descended from King David will mourn by itself, and their wives will mourn by themselves. The clan descended from Nathan, King David's son, will mourn by itself, and their wives will mourn by themselves. 13 The clan descended from Levi will mourn by itself, and their wives will mourn by themselves. The clan descended from Shimei will mourn by itself, and their wives will mourn by themselves. 14 All the clans that remain will each mourn by itself, and their wives will mourn by themselves.

13 1 At that time, Yahweh will continually cleanse the descendants of King David and the people who live in Jerusalem; he will forgive the sins that they have committed and take away everything that has made them impure. 2 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, declares, "At that time I will destroy all the idols in the land, so that no one will even speak their names or remember them anymore. I will also drive out of the land those who falsely claim to be prophets, along with the impure spirit that controls them.

3 If anyone still prophesies falsely, his own father and mother, the ones who gave birth to him, will tell him that he must die, because he has lied by claiming that he was speaking with my authority. Then, while he is prophesying, his own father and mother, who gave birth to him, will stab him to death.

4 At that time, every one of those prophets will feel ashamed of the visions that he claimed
to see when he prophesied. None of them will wear the rough garment of animal hair that
prophets wear, because they will no longer try to deceive people. 5 Instead, each one will say,
‘I am not a prophet. I am a farmer; a man sold me to this land’s owner when I was young.’ 6 If
someone asks him, ‘Then what are these wounds on your chest?’ he will answer, ‘Someone
wounded me at the house of my friends.’”

7 Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says this: “I command that
someone kill with a sword the leader who cares for my people,
the man who is my close associate.
When someone strikes that leader down,
the people whom he led will scatter in every direction,
and I myself will attack even the lowliest people among them.”
8 Yahweh declares, “Throughout the whole land, two out of every three people
will certainly die,
and only one third of the people will remain alive.
9 I will cause that remaining third to suffer greatly in order to purify them,
just as a person refines silver and tests gold by heating them in a fire.
Then they will call out to me for help,
and I will answer them.
I will tell them that they are my people,
and they will declare that I, Yahweh, am their God.”

14 1 Pay attention! Yahweh has appointed a time when enemies will plunder the city of
Jerusalem, deciding who will take what valuables while they are still in the city where you
have to watch them. 2 Yahweh will gather the armies of all the nations to come and fight
against Jerusalem. Those armies will capture the city, ransack the houses, and rape the women.
Half of the people who live there they will take away to other lands as captives, but they will
not remove the rest of the people from the city. 3 Then Yahweh will go out and fight against
those nations, just as he fought his enemies in battles long ago. 4 On that day, Yahweh himself
will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem. He will split the Mount of
Olives in two from east to west, and a very large valley will open up between the two parts.

Half of the mountain will move away toward the north, and half of it will move away toward the south. **5** You people will escape through that valley between the mountains, because the valley will reach all the way to Azal. You will run away just as your ancestors ran away because of the earthquake that happened when Uzziah was the king of Judah. Then Yahweh my God will come, and all his holy angels will come with him. **6** At that time, there will be no daylight; the bright lights in the sky will grow dim. **7** That will be a unique day, and only Yahweh knows when it will happen. It will not follow the normal cycle of day and night. Even in the evening, when it is usually dark, there will still be light. **8** At that time, fresh water will flow out from Jerusalem. Half of it will flow east to the Salt Sea, and half of it will flow west to the Great Sea. The water will keep flowing throughout the whole year.

9 Then Yahweh will rule as king over the whole earth. At that time, people everywhere will worship Yahweh alone, and they will honor him alone as God. **10** The whole land from Geba in the north to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become a flat plain. But Jerusalem will rise up high and will remain where it has always stood. The city will stretch from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the First Gate, on to the Gate of the Corners, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. **11** People will live in Jerusalem, and enemies will never again completely destroy it. The people who live in Jerusalem will always be safe.

12 Yahweh will cause all the nations who fought against Jerusalem to have these terrible diseases. Their flesh will rot away while they are still alive and standing. Their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. **13** At that time, Yahweh will cause those people to panic completely. They will grab one another by the hand, and they will attack each other. **14** The people of Judah will also fight with Jerusalem. They will gather the wealth of all the surrounding nations—huge amounts of gold, silver, and clothing. **15** The horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and all the other animals in the camps of those enemies will suffer from that same disease.

16 Then everyone who survives from all the nations that attacked Jerusalem will go up to Jerusalem every year to worship the King, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters, when the people live in temporary shelters. **17** If any of the people groups on the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, then Yahweh will not send any rain on their land, and their

crops will fail. **18** If the people of Egypt do not go up to Jerusalem to worship there, Yahweh will not judge them the same way. Since they depend on the Nile River rather than on rain, Yahweh will cause them to have the same diseases experienced by all the other nations that do not go up to celebrate the Festival of Shelters. **19** That is how Yahweh will punish the people of Egypt and the people of every other nation that does not go up to celebrate the Festival of Shelters. **20** At that time, someone will engrave the words “Sacred to Yahweh” on the bells that hang on the horses. People will consider the cooking pots in the temple of Yahweh to be just as sacred as the bowls that the priests use in front of the altar. **21** Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be sacred to Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. Everyone who comes to offer sacrifices will take some of those pots and boil the meat of their sacrifices in them. At that time, there will no longer be any merchant selling goods in the temple of Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies.

Malachi

1 **1** This is a serious message from Yahweh. Yahweh gave it to Malachi to tell to the Israelite people.

2 Yahweh says to the Israelites, “I have shown that I love you.” They may wonder what I mean and ask, “How have you shown love to us?” Yahweh would reply, “Esau and Jacob were brothers. I chose to love Jacob and his descendants. **3** But I did not favor Esau and his descendants. I turned Esau’s hill country into empty land. I let wild dogs live in the places where Esau’s people used to live.” **4** The people of Edom, who are Esau’s descendants, might say, “Enemies have destroyed our towns, but we will rebuild them.” But Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says, “Even if they rebuild, I will tear down what they build. People will call Edom a land of evil people. They will say that Yahweh will always be angry with the people of Edom. **5** You Israelites will see this happen. Then you will say, ‘Even outside the land of Israel, people know that Yahweh is great!’”

6 Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says, “A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. Since I am like a father to you, you should honor me, but you do not. Since I am your master, you should respect me, but you do not. I am saying this to you priests who do not respect me. You may wonder what I mean and ask, ‘How have we shown disrespect to you?’ **7** You show disrespect by offering unacceptable sacrifices on my altar. You may wonder what I mean and ask, ‘How have we offered unacceptable sacrifices?’ I will tell you. You show disrespect by thinking that you can treat my altar with contempt. **8** You bring blind animals to sacrifice to me. That is wrong. You bring animals that cannot walk or are sick. That is also wrong. If you gave animals like that to your governor, he would not be pleased with you, and he would not accept them.” This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **9** “But you are asking me, God, to be kind to you, even though you have done these wrong things. Do not think that I will accept you!” This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **10** Yahweh. Who commands the heavenly armies, says, “I wish one of you would close the temple doors. Then you would not light useless fires on my altar. I am

not happy with you. I will not accept any offerings from you. **11** People all over the world will respect me. In every place, people will burn incense to honor me and bring me pure offerings, because everyone will know how great I am." This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **12** "But you dishonor me. You say that my altar is not important, and you do not value the food you get from it. **13** You even say, 'We are tired of doing this work!' You show that you do not care about it." This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. "You bring me animals that you stole, cannot walk, or are sick. If you bring these as offerings, do not think that I will accept them from you!" says Yahweh. **14** "I will punish anyone who tries to cheat me. If someone promises to give me a good male animal from his flock but then gives me one that is not healthy, I will punish that person. After all, I am the great King. I am Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, and people all over the world respect me."

2 **1** Yahweh says, "Now, priests, this command is for you. **2** If you do not obey me and make sure that you honor me, I will curse you," says Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies. "I will even curse the good things I have given you. In fact, I have already started to curse them, because you are not taking seriously what I have told you to do. **3** I am ready to punish you by keeping you from having good harvests. You will be disgraced, as if I had spread animal waste on your faces, the waste from the animals you sacrifice at festivals. People will consider you as worthless as that waste! **4** Then you will know that I gave you this command so that my agreement with the priests, the descendants of Levi, will continue." This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **5** "I made a peaceful and life-giving agreement with them because they revered me, and they revered me greatly. **6** They taught the people what was true, and they did not say things that were wrong. They lived peacefully and honestly, the way I wanted them to, and they helped many people stop doing bad things. **7** After all, a priest should teach people how to know God better. People should learn from what the priest says, because he brings messages from me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. **8** But you priests have stopped living the way I want. Your teaching has caused many people to do wrong things. You have failed to keep the agreement I made with the Levite priests," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. **9** "So I have made people disrespect you and I have humiliated you before all the people. This is because

you have not lived the way I want people to live. You have also not treated everyone fairly when you have applied my laws."

10 In a sense, we all have the same father, since the same God created each of us. So we should not break our promises to each other. If we do, we dishonor the agreement God made with our ancestors. **11** The people of Judah have not been faithful to God. They have done terrible things in Israel and Jerusalem. They have dishonored the temple that Yahweh loves. They are worshiping foreign gods instead of Yahweh. **12** I hope Yahweh will remove from among the people of Israel every single person who does this, even if they bring offerings to Yahweh, who is the commander of the heavenly armies. **13** This is another thing you do: When you come to offer sacrifices at Yahweh's altar, you weep bitterly. You cry and groan because Yahweh no longer accepts your offerings. **14** You may wonder what I mean and ask, "Why does he not accept them?" It is because Yahweh knows that you have not been faithful to the wife you married as a young man. You did this even though she was your partner and you promised to be her husband. **15** God has united husbands and wives so that they are one, and he has made their marriage a spiritual relationship. God made them one because he wants them to have children who are faithful to him. So be careful. Do not break your promise to the wife you married when you were a young man. **16** Yahweh, the God of Israel, says, "I hate divorce. I hate it when one of you does such a cruel thing to your wife. So be careful. Do not break your promise to be faithful to your wife." This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says.

17 Yahweh is tired of hearing what you have been saying. You may wonder what I mean and ask, "How have we made him tired?" You have made him tired by saying, "Yahweh thinks that people who do evil things are actually good. He is happy with them." Yahweh is also tired of hearing you say, "God is not being fair!"

3 **1** Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says, "Pay attention! I am about to send my messenger. He will get things ready for me to come. Then I, the Lord you are looking for, will suddenly come to my temple. You want someone to bring you a message about my agreement with you, and I am going to send someone to do that. **2** But when he does come, no one will be able to keep living the way they were living before. When he appears, he will not tell anyone that he is innocent. But he will purify people **from sin**, just as fire makes metal pure

and soap makes clothes clean. **3** He will help people stop sinning, just as a metalworker sits patiently near silver he has melted and keeps removing impurities from it. He will purify the descendants of Levi, just as a metalworker purifies gold and silver. Then they will bring proper offerings to Yahweh. **4** After that, Yahweh will accept the offerings that the people of Judah and Jerusalem bring him, just as he did in ancient times." **5** Yahweh, who commands the armies of heaven, says, "I will come to judge you. I will immediately declare people guilty and punish them if they have practiced witchcraft, committed adultery, made false promises, not paid fair wages to their workers, or taken advantage of widows and orphans and foreigners. People have done those things because they did not think I would punish them, but I will.

6 I will do this because I am Yahweh, and I swore to Abraham that I would bless his descendants. When I make a promise, I keep it. That is why you descendants of Jacob are still living here in Judea, even though you are disobeying me. **7** Ever since the time of your ancestors, you have disobeyed my laws. You have completely ignored them. Now come back to me, and I will come back to you," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. "You may wonder what I mean and ask, 'How can we come back to you?' **8** You might think that no one would even try to steal from God. But you are stealing from me! You may wonder what I mean and ask, 'How are we stealing from you?' You are stealing from me by not giving me the tithes and offerings that you should. **9** Because you are robbing me in this way, I have put a curse on all of you Israelites. **10** Bring all the tithes to the room in the temple where the priests keep contributions. Make sure there is food for the priests who serve in my temple. Try this and see what I do in response," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. "If you do this, then I will bless you so much that it will be as if I had opened windows in the sky and poured out blessings to you. You will not have enough room to store all of the crops that grow in your fields. **11** I will prevent pests from eating your crops. Your grapevines will produce plenty of grapes," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. **12** "Then people from all nations will say that God has blessed you. They will say that because your land will be a delightful place," says Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies.

13 Yahweh says, "You have said terrible things about me. You may wonder what I mean and ask, 'What have we said about you?' **14** You have said, 'It is useless to serve God. We have not gained anything by obeying his commands or by showing Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, that we are sorry for our sins. **15** We have come to think that proud

people become prosperous. Even when people do bad things, they succeed. They challenge God by doing wicked things, but God does not punish them.'"

16 Then those who honored Yahweh all spoke with one another. Yahweh listened carefully to what they said. Those who honored Yahweh and respected him all wrote their names down in a book as he watched. **17** Then Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, said, "These people especially will belong to me. On the day when I judge people, I will spare them from punishment. I will treat them kindly, just as parents treat kindly the children who obey them. **18** Then once more you will clearly see that righteous people do prosper while wicked people do not. There is that difference between those who obey God and those who disobey him."

4 **1** Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, "Pay attention! The time is coming when I am going to judge people. People will feel their guilt intensely, as if they were standing in front of a hot furnace. At that time, I will destroy all proud and wicked people as if they were straw burning in a fire. I will destroy them completely, just as a fire burns up plants from top to bottom. **2** But those of you who honor me will experience my power saving you as if the sun were rising and bringing you warmth and light. By my power, I will heal you. You will be as happy as calves are when they leave their stalls to go and play out in the open fields. **3** At the time when I do this, you will completely defeat every wicked person. It will be as if you are stomping them down with your feet." This is what Yahweh, who commands the heavenly armies, says. **4** "Remember to obey the laws that I gave to my servant Moses on Mount Sinai. Obey all the rules and regulations that I gave him for all the Israelite people to obey. **5** Listen carefully! I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the grand and frightening day comes when I, Yahweh, will judge everyone. **6** Because of his message, parents and children will love each other again. I am going to make this happen so that I will not have to come and curse your country."

Matthew

1 **1** This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah. He is a descendant of King David, who was a descendant of Abraham, the ancestor of all Jewish people.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and Judah's older and younger brothers. **3** Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah. Their mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezrom. Hezrom was the father of Aram. **4** Aram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. **5** Salmon was the father of Boaz. Boaz's mother was Rahab. Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed's mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse. **6** Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon. Solomon's mother was Bathsheba, who had been Uriah's wife. **7** Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asaph. **8** Asaph was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was an ancestor of Ozias. **9** Ozias was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. **10** Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amos. Amos was the father of Josiah. **11** Josiah was the grandfather of Jechoniah and Jechoniah's brothers. They lived at the time when the Babylonian army took the Israelites as captives to the country of Babylon.

12 After the Babylonian army took the Israelites as captives to the country of Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Salathiel. Salathiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. **14** Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Achim. Achim was the father of Eliud. **15** Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob. **16** Jacob was the father of Joseph. Joseph was Mary's husband. Mary was the mother of Jesus. Jesus is the one whom we call the Messiah.

17 So then, there are 14 ancestors when we count from Abraham to David. There are 14 ancestors when we count from David until when the Babylonian army took the Israelites as captives to the country of Babylon. There are 14 ancestors when we count from that time to the Messiah.

18 I will tell you what happened when the mother of Jesus the Messiah gave birth to him. His mother Mary was about to marry a man named Joseph, and they had not yet had sex. Despite that, Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant with a baby (whom the Holy Spirit had given to her). 19 Joseph, who was about to marry her, thought that Mary had sex with another man. Joseph usually did what was right, and he also did not want to shame Mary. So, he decided to say in private that he would not marry her. 20 While Joseph was deciding what to do, he saw an angel from the Lord while he was sleeping! The angel said to him, "Joseph, King David's descendant, do not be reluctant to marry Mary. I say that because it was the Holy Spirit who caused her to become pregnant. 21 She will have a male child. You should name him 'Jesus,' which means 'the Lord rescues'. You should name him that because he will rescue his people from the sins that they have committed."

22 When all those things happened, what the Lord said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah came true. Isaiah said,

23 "A young woman who has never had sex will become pregnant! She will give birth to a male child. People will name him 'Immanuel.'"

The name Immanuel means, "God is with us." 24 After Joseph woke up, he married Mary, which is what the angel from the Lord had told him to do. 25 However, he did not have sex with her before she gave birth to a male child. Joseph named the child Jesus.

2 1 Mary gave birth to Jesus in the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judea. During that time, Herod was the king there. Some time after Mary gave birth to Jesus, some scholars who studied the stars traveled from eastern countries to the city of Jerusalem! 2 They were asking people, "Where is the child who will be the king over the Jewish people? We saw a star appear in the sky that indicated that his mother had given birth to him. We traveled here so that we can worship him."

3 When King Herod learned what these men were asking, he was upset. Many people in the
city of Jerusalem were also upset. 4 So, King Herod summoned all the Jewish ruling priests
and teachers of the Jewish law. He asked them about where the Messiah's mother would give
birth to him.

5 They answered him, "His mother will give birth to him in the town of Bethlehem in the
region of Judea. We know that because of what the prophet Micah wrote.

> 6 'You who live in the town of Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
> your town is one of the important towns in Judah.
> That is because someone from your town will become a leader.
> That person will rule God's people, the Israelites.'"

7 After that, King Herod summoned the scholars who studied the stars to talk with him
privately. He asked them about exactly when they first saw the special star. 8 After that, he told
them, "Go to the town of Bethlehem and look for the child. When you are sure that you know
who he is, come back and tell me who he is. That way, I too can go and worship him." Then he
sent them away.

9 The scholars listened to the king, and then they traveled to Bethlehem. The star which
they saw when it appeared in the sky guided them! It moved in the sky until it was directly
above the place where the child, Jesus, was living. 10 When they saw how the star moved and
then stopped, they were extremely happy. 11 They went into the house above which the star had
stopped. There, they saw the child Jesus and his mother Mary. They bowed down and
worshiped him. Then, they unpacked the valuable things that they had brought with them.
They gave Jesus gold, incense, and valuable tree resin. 12 After that, God used a dream to tell
them not to go back to King Herod. So, they went home on a different road than the one on
which they had come.

13 After the scholars who studied the stars went home, Joseph saw an angel from the Lord
while he was sleeping! The angel told him, "King Herod wants to find the child so that he can
kill him. So, when you wake up, escape to the land of Egypt with the child and his mother,
your wife. Stay there until I tell you that you can return home."

14 Then Joseph woke up. During that night, he left for the land of Egypt with the child and the child's mother, his wife. **15** They lived in the land of Egypt while King Herod ruled. So, what the Lord said by speaking through the prophet Hosea came true:

"I have told my son to leave Egypt."

16 When the scholars who studied the stars did not come back to King Herod, he realized that they had fooled him. He became furious. He had some of his soldiers go to the city of Bethlehem and the areas around it and kill every male child who was two years old or younger. He picked those ages because of what the scholars who studied the stars told him about the exact time when they first saw the star. **17** At that time, what God said by speaking through the prophet Jeremiah came true:

18 "People heard women in the town of Ramah lamenting loudly.
It was the descendants of Rachel mourning for their children.
Because their children were dead, they would not stop mourning."

19 During this time, Joseph and his family were living in the land of Egypt. After Herod died, Joseph saw an angel from the Lord while he was sleeping! **20** The angel told him, "Everyone who wanted to kill the child has died. So, when you wake up, return to the country of Israel with the child and his mother, your wife." **21** Then Joseph woke up. He went back to the country of Israel with the child and the child's mother, his wife.

22 However, Joseph heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father, King Herod, as king over the region of Judea. So, he was afraid to live there. Further, while Joseph was sleeping, God instructed him to live somewhere else. So, Joseph decided to live in the region of Galilee. **23** When he and his family arrived in Galilee, they lived in the town of Nazareth. In that way, what God said by speaking through the prophets came true:

"People will say that the Messiah is from Nazareth."

3 **1** While Jesus was living in Galilee, a man whom people called John the Baptizer went to a desolate area in the region of Judea. He proclaimed, **2** "Stop doing what is wrong! You should

do that because God is about to establish his heavenly kingdom here.” 3 That man is the one about whom the Lord said, by speaking through the prophet Isaiah,

> “In the desolate place, someone will be calling out to the people:
> ‘Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!
> Make yourselves ready for when he comes!’”

4 As for this man John, he wore rough clothes that he made out of camel’s hair. He fastened around his waist a belt that he made from animal skin. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that desolate area. 5 At that time, people who lived in the city of Jerusalem, many people who lived in the region of Judea, and many people who lived near the Jordan River often went to listen to John. 6 Many of these people agreed that they had sinned. Then, John baptized them in the Jordan River.

7 In fact, many men from the Pharisee sect and from the Sadducee sect went to John so that he would baptize them. When he saw them, he declared to them, “You people are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! You think that if I baptize you, God will spare you when he punishes sinners. But I did not say that! 8 You need to do the things that show that you have truly rejected your previous sinful way of living! 9 Do not think to yourselves, ‘Certainly God will not punish us, because we are descendants of Abraham!’ That does not impress God. Let me assure you, God could turn these stones into descendants of Abraham! 10 You are like fruit trees that do not produce good fruit. God is like a man who is positioning the head of his axe at the base of those trees, ready to chop them down and throw them into the fire. God is ready to punish you like that if you continue sinning.

11 I use water to baptize you so that you stop doing what is wrong. However, soon you will see someone else who is more powerful than I am. It is not appropriate for me to be even his servant. He will give you the Holy Spirit and make you pure. 12 The Messiah is ready to do that, just like a farmer who has his winnowing fork ready to use. A farmer separates all the good grain from the useless chaff. He stores the grain safely in his barn, but he burns the chaff until it is all gone. Much like that farmer, the Messiah will preserve the people who obey God, and he will punish the people who disobey God.”

13 After John began preaching and baptizing people, Jesus traveled from the region of
Galilee to where John was near the Jordan River. He wanted John to baptize him. 14 However,
John did not want to baptize him. He said to Jesus, “You should not want me to baptize you.
Actually, I need you to baptize me!”

15 Jesus answered him, “Please baptize me at this time. When you do, you and I will be
acting appropriately by doing what God requires.” After Jesus said that, John agreed to baptize
him.

16 Right after John baptized him, Jesus walked out of the River Jordan. Then, God allowed
him to see into heaven! He saw that the Holy Spirit, who looked like a small bird, was
descending from heaven and landing on him. 17 Then God spoke from heaven! He declared,
“This man is my Son, the one whom I love dearly. What he does pleases me.”

4 1 After that, the Holy Spirit took Jesus into a desolate area. That way, the ruling evil spirit
could try to make him sin. 2 He did not eat any food for 40 days. After that, he was hungry.
3 Then the devil arrived. He wanted to make Jesus sin. He said to Jesus, “Show me that you
really are God’s Son. Command these stones to become loaves of bread for you to eat.”

4 Jesus responded, “I will not do that, because Moses wrote in the Scriptures, ‘People need
more than food to stay alive. They also need to do everything that God tells them to do.’”

5 After that, the ruling evil spirit transported Jesus to Jerusalem, the sacred city. He made
him stand on the highest part of the temple. 6 Then, he said to Jesus, “Show me that you really
are God’s Son. Jump from here! You will not hurt yourself, because it says in the Scriptures,

> ‘God will tell his angels to protect you.
> They will carry you,
> and you will not hurt yourself at all.’”

7 Jesus responded, “Again, I will not do that, because Moses wrote in the Scriptures, ‘Do
not provoke the Lord your God to see what he will do.’”

8 Then, the devil transported Jesus to the top of a very tall mountain. **From there,** he showed Jesus all the nations in the world. **He showed Jesus** how rich and powerful they were.
9 He told Jesus, "Bow down and worship me. Then, I will make you the ruler of all these countries."

10 After that, Jesus responded, "Leave me, Satan! **I will not worship you,** because Moses wrote in the Scriptures, 'You must only worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you may honor **as God**.'"

11 After **Jesus said that,** the ruling evil spirit went away. Then, angels arrived and took care of Jesus!

12 Soon afterward, Jesus learned that **King Herod Antipas** had put John **the Baptizer** in prison. So, Jesus went back to the region of Galilee. **13** After he visited the town of Nazareth, he went to live in the town of Capernaum. Capernaum is next to the Sea of Galilee in the region that used to belong to the tribe of Zebulun and the tribe of Naphtali. **14** So, what God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah came true:

> **15** "**I am speaking about people in** the regions that belong to the tribe of Zebulun and to the tribe of Naphtali.
>
> **These regions are** by the Sea **of Galilee**, on the other side of the Jordan River.
>
> **We call these regions** Galilee, where many non-Jewish people live.
>
> **16** The people **who live in those regions** sin and despair. They are like people who sit in dark places.
>
> However, God will rescue them. They will be like people who see a bright light.
>
> Again, **the people in those regions** suffer and die. They are like people who sit in a dangerous place without any light.
>
> However, God will save them. It will be as if a light shines on them."

17 After **he went to live in the town of Capernaum**, Jesus started proclaiming, "Stop doing what is wrong! **You should do that** because God is about to establish his heavenly kingdom here."

18 One day, Jesus was walking next to the Sea of Galilee. He saw two men: Simon, who also had the name Peter, and Simon's younger brother Andrew. They earned money by catching and selling fish. When Jesus saw them, they were using nets to try to catch fish. 19 Jesus commanded them, "Come with me and be my apprentices. I will teach you how to gather people to be my apprentices, just as you have been gathering fish." 20 As soon as Jesus said this, they stopped working. They went with him and were his apprentices. 21 Jesus kept walking next to the sea. Then, he saw two more men: James, the son of Zebedee, and James' younger brother John. When Jesus saw them, they were preparing their fishing tools in a boat with their father, Zebedee. Jesus commanded them, "Come with me and be my apprentices." 22 As soon as they heard what Jesus said, they got out of the boat and left their father. They went with Jesus and were his apprentices.

23 Jesus visited all the towns in the region of Galilee. He instructed people when they gathered in the Jewish meeting places. He proclaimed the good news about God's kingdom. He cured many Jewish people who were sick in any way. 24 Many people who lived in the region of Syria heard about him. They took to him many people who were suffering, people who were sick or hurting, people with demons, and people who could not move or who had seizures. Jesus healed them. 25 Large groups of people went wherever Jesus went. These people came from the region of Galilee, from the region of the Ten Towns, from the city of Jerusalem, from the region of Judea, and from the east side of the Jordan River.

5 1 When Jesus saw these large groups of people, he went up on a hill. He sat down there, ready to teach, and his apprentices gathered around him to listen. 2 Then he began to instruct them. He said,

3 "It is very good for those who do not have spiritual strength.
That is because they are part of God's heavenly kingdom.

4 It is very good for those who grieve.
That is because God will encourage them.

5 It is very good for those who are gentle.
That is because God will give them the world when he renews it.

6 It is very good for those who greatly desire to do what is right.

That is because God will enable them to do what they desire to do.

7 It is very good for those who are merciful to other people.

That is because God will be merciful to them.

8 It is very good for those who desire what is good.

That is because they will be with God.

9 It is very good for those who enable people to be peaceful with each other.

That is because God will regard them as his own children.

10 It is very good for those whom others mistreat because they do what is right.

That is because they are part of God's heavenly kingdom.

11 It is very good for you whenever people act against you because you are my apprentices. They may shame you, mistreat you, and tell many hurtful lies about you. **12** When people treat you like that, God is ready to reward you greatly from heaven. So, you should rejoice very much! Further, people mistreated the Jewish prophets long ago just as people mistreat you now.

13 You are like salt since you make people in this world better, just as salt seasons food. However, if salt were to stop seasoning food well, no one could make it season food well again. No one can use it for anything. So, people throw it away, and others walk on it. In the same way, I will punish you if you do not make this world better.

14 You are like a light that illuminates everyone in this world since you tell people about me. You are like a town on a hill that everyone can see since everyone notices the good things that you do. **15** Further, when people light a lamp, they do not cover it with a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand. That way, it illuminates everyone in the house. **16** Just as the light from a lamp illuminates everyone in a house, so you should publicly do what is right. That way, people will notice the good things that you do. Then, they will praise God, your Father, who rules from heaven.

17 You should not conclude that I am here to abolish any parts of the Scriptures. I am not here to abolish them. Rather, I am here so that they come true. **18** Every part of the Scriptures will be authoritative as long as what God has created continues to exist. Further, the Scriptures will be authoritative until everything that their authors wrote about happens. What I have said is

true. **19** So then, suppose that someone disregards even one of the most insignificant laws. Also, suppose that this person teaches other people to do the same thing. This person will be insignificant in God's heavenly kingdom. In contrast, suppose that someone obeys the laws and teaches other people to do the same thing. This person will be very important in God's heavenly kingdom. **20** Here is what I mean: You need to do what is right even more than the teachers of the Jewish law and the Pharisees do. That is the only way to participate in God's heavenly kingdom.

21 You know that God said to our ancestors, 'You must not murder anyone. People who murder someone deserve to have a judge decide they are guilty and punish them.' **22** Now here is what I want to tell you: people who become angry with fellow believers deserve to have a judge decide they are guilty and punish them. People who insult fellow believers deserve to have the Jewish council decide they are guilty and punish them. People who say **that fellow believers are** foolish deserve to have God punish them in hell. **23** So then, suppose that you are standing near the altar **in the temple** to present something **to God**. Then, you recall that you have offended a fellow believer. **24** You should set down near the altar what you are presenting **to God** and depart **to visit that fellow believer**. You should resolve what happened to offend that fellow believer. Then, you can go back **to the altar** and present your gift **to God**. **25** Suppose that someone intends to say to a judge that you did something wrong. You should try to resolve what happened before that person can speak to the judge. That way, the person does not bring you to the judge, who would command one of the officials to put you in jail. **26** **If you go to jail,** you will never get out of there until you are able to pay every bit of what the judge says you owe. What I have said is true.

27 You know that God said, 'Married people must remain sexually faithful to their spouses.' **28** Now here is what I want to tell you: suppose that a man stares at a woman who is not his wife so that he can think about having sex with her. Simply because of what he desires, he has been sexually unfaithful to his wife. **29** Suppose that you sinned because you looked at something. You should never do that again, even if you have to remove your eyes to make sure of it! **You should respond that drastically** because it is better for you to have no eyes than to have a complete body but end up in hell. **30** Suppose that you sinned because you touched something. You should never do that again, even if you have to chop off your hands to make

sure of it! You should respond that drastically because it is better for you to have no hands than to have a complete body but end up in hell.

31 God said, ‘Suppose that a man wants to divorce his wife. He must present her with a document that states that he is divorcing her.’ 32 Now here is what I want to tell you: a man may divorce his wife only if she has had improper sex. When a man divorces his wife for any other reason, he makes her disobey what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one’s spouse. Further, any man who marries a woman whose husband has divorced her also disobeys what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one’s spouse.

33 Here are more examples: you know that God said to our ancestors, ‘You must not promise to do anything that you will not do. Rather, you must always do what you promised the Lord that you would do.’ 34 Now here is what I want to tell you: you must never have someone or something guarantee what you promise. For example, you must not have heaven guarantee it. That is because heaven is where God rules. 35 You must not have the earth guarantee what you promise. That is because the earth is what God rules over. You must not have the city of Jerusalem guarantee it. That is because Jerusalem is a city that belongs to God, who is a powerful king. 36 You must not have your own head guarantee what you promise. That is because you cannot even control the color of one of your hairs. 37 When you promise something, just say ‘Yes, I will do it,’ or ‘No, I will not do it.’ When you say more to guarantee what you promised, you are doing what Satan wants you to do.

38 You know that God said, ‘You must punish people in a way that matches how they hurt others. For example, consider a person who blinded someone. You should punish that person by blinding him or her too. Consider a person who knocked out someone’s tooth. You should punish that person by knocking out his or her tooth too.’ 39 Now here is what I want to tell you: do not try to stop people who do bad things to you. Rather, suppose that someone insults you by hitting you on the right side of your face. You should turn your face so that the person can hit the left side also. 40 Suppose that someone wants to sue you for your shirt. You should give that person your coat as well. 41 Suppose that someone requires you to carry his or her burden for one section of road. You should continue to carry that person’s burden for a second section of road. 42 Suppose that someone requests something from you. You should give that person what they requested. Suppose that someone wants to receive a loan from you. You should lend money to that person.

43 You know that God said, ‘Care for your fellow Jews.’ Some people add, ‘Despise those
who oppose you.’ 44 Now here is what I want to tell you: you should care for those who
oppose you. You should pray for those who mistreat you. 45 God causes the sun to shine on
people who are wicked and on people who are good. God makes it rain on people who do what
is right and on people who do what is wrong. So, when you care and pray for people who oppose
you, you are like children of God, your Father, who rules from heaven. 46 Further, if you care
for only those who care for you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even unkind
tax collectors care for those who care for them. 47 If you say hello only to fellow believers,
you are not behaving any differently than unbelievers do. Even unbelieving non-Jews say hello
to their friends. 48 So, you should always do what is right, just as God, your Father, who rules
from heaven, always does what is right.

6 1 When you do what God desires, make sure that you are not doing it so that people
praise you for it. When you do what God desires so that others praise you, God your Father,
who rules from heaven, will not reward you.

2 Whenever some people give money to help poor people, they have someone announce
what they are doing by playing a loud instrument in the Jewish meeting places and in the main
roads. They pretend to help others, but they just want other people to praise them. God will not
reward them any more than that. What I have said is true. So, you should not behave like that.
3 Instead, when you give money to help poor people, you should do it as privately as possible.
4 That way, only God your Father will know that you have given money to help poor people.
When he observes you doing that privately, he will reward you.

5 Whenever some people pray to God, they enjoy doing so while standing in the Jewish
meeting places and on the street corners. They pretend to focus on praying, but they just want
other people to recognize them. God will not reward them any more than that. What I have said
is true. So, you should not behave like that. 6 In contrast, when you want to pray to God, you
should go to a private room in your house and close the door. Then, you can pray to God your
Father, who is there with you in private. When he observes you doing that privately, he will
reward you. 7 Further, as you are praying, do not repeat yourself as non-Jews do. They
suppose that their gods will listen to them if they use many words. 8 So then, do not pray to

God as they do. In fact, before you ask him **for anything that you need**, God your Father is already aware of what you need.

9 Here is how you should pray to God:

'**I pray to** God our Father, who rules from heaven.
May all people glorify you.
10 May you establish your kingdom.
May everyone do what you want
here on earth, just as **they already do** in heaven.
11 Please give us the food we need each day.
12 We have forgiven people for when they did not treat us rightly.
In the same way, please forgive us for when we do not act rightly.
13 Please protect us from everything that tries to make us sin.
Please rescue us when Satan tries to harm us.'

14 God your Father, who rules from heaven, will forgive you as long as you forgive the people who sin against you. **15** However, God your Father will not forgive you when you sin against him as long as you do not forgive other people.

16 Whenever some people do not eat in order to please God, they change how their faces look. They pretend to be sad, but they just want other people to recognize that they are not eating. God will not reward them any more than that. What I have said is true. So, you should not behave like that. **17** In contrast, when you do not eat in order to please God, you should keep yourselves neat and clean. **18** That way, other people do not know that you are not eating. Only God your Father, who is there with you in private, **will know**. When he observes you doing that privately, he will reward you

19 You should not collect many valuable things for yourselves in this world. In this world, insects eat clothes, and metal objects corrode. Further, robbers force their way into people's houses to take their goods. **20** Rather, you should collect many valuable things for yourselves in heaven. In heaven, insects do not eat clothes, and metal objects do not corrode. Further, robbers do not force their way into people's houses to take their goods. **21** **That is important** because you think and care most about the place where you collect valuable things.

22 Your eyes are like a lamp since they enable you to see. If your eyes are working properly, then your whole body will benefit. **23** However, if your eyes are not working properly, then your whole body does not benefit at all. So consider how bad it is when what you see as bright light is actually very dark!

24 Servants cannot serve two different masters **at the same time**. **If they tried to do that,** they would hate one of them and love the other one, or they would be loyal to one of them and consider the other one to be unimportant. **In the same way,** you cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life to acquiring money and other material possessions.

25 So then, here is what I want to tell you: do not worry about whether you will have enough to eat or drink to stay alive. Do not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear to stay warm. After all, your life is more important than the food you eat, and your body is more important than the clothes you put on it. **26** Think about the birds **that fly** in the sky. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops. They do not store crops, but God your Father, who rules from heaven, provides food for them. You are certainly much more important than they are**, so you can be sure that God will give you what you need**. **27** You cannot add even a minute to your life by worrying about it!

28 So, you should not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear. Observe the way that flowers grow in a field. They do not work **to earn money**, and they do not make their own clothes. **29** However, here is what I want to tell you: King Solomon, who **lived long ago and** wore glorious clothes, never dressed as beautifully as a single flower. **30** God makes plants beautiful, even though they grow for only a short time. Then people **cut them down and** throw them into the fire. **But you are very precious to God.** He will care for you even more than he cares for the plants. You should trust God more than you do! **31** So then, do not worry by asking about whether you have anything to eat or drink, or whether you have clothes to wear. **32** The people who do not know God worry about such things. **However, you should not worry about such things** because God your Father, who rules from heaven, knows that you need them all. **33** You should concentrate primarily on what you can do for God's kingdom and on doing what God considers to be right. When you do those things, **you can trust God** to provide everything you need.

34 So then, do not worry about what will happen tomorrow. You can worry tomorrow about what will happen during that day. Enough bad things happen each day that you should not worry about bad things that might happen tomorrow.

7 **1** Do not harshly criticize other people. That way, God will not harshly criticize you. **2** I say that because God will harshly criticize you in the same way that you harshly criticize others. In fact, God will treat you in the same way that you treat others. **3** None of you should concentrate on the small faults of another person. You should concentrate on your own serious faults. Otherwise, that would be like noticing a speck in the eye of that person while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. **4** You should not tell another believer, 'Let me help you correct your faults,' while you have not yet dealt with your own faults. **5** If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first stop committing your own sins. That will be like removing a large plank from your own eye. Then, as a result, you will have the spiritual insight you need to help others get rid of the smaller faults that are like little specks in their eyes.

6 Apply this saying to how you live: do not present sacred things to dogs, and do not put valuable things in front of pigs. I say that because the pigs will crush your valuable things, and the dogs will destroy the sacred things and then attack you.

7 Keep asking God for the things you need, and he will give them to you. Keep seeking those things from God, and you will receive them. Ask God to make things possible for you, and he will act on your behalf. **8** You should do those things because everyone who keeps asking God for the things they need will receive them. Everyone who seeks those things from God will receive them. If people ask God to make things possible for them, God will act on their behalf. **9** Suppose one of you had a child who asked you for bread to eat. You certainly would not give your child a rock to eat! **10** Similarly, suppose that your child asked you for a fish to eat. You certainly would not give your child a poisonous snake to eat! **11** So, even though you people are sinful, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. Therefore, it is even more certain that God your Father, who rules from heaven, will give good things to those who ask him.

12 In conclusion, in whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way you should act toward them. Then, you will be doing what it says in all the parts of the Scriptures.

13-14 **When you choose how to live, you are like a traveler choosing which path to take.** There is an easy path and a large gate, and many people go that way. However, if you go that way, God will punish you. There is also a hard path and a small gate, and only a few people go that way. You should use that small gate, because that is how you will truly live.

15 Watch out for people who lie when they claim to speak messages from God. They may look like they are part of God's people, but really they want to hurt God's people. **16** You can tell what people are really like by the things that they do. So, people are like plants in this way. A bush with thorns does not produce grapes. A thorny plant does not produce figs.
17 Similarly, all healthy fruit trees produce fruit that is good to eat. All unhealthy fruit trees produce fruit that is bad to eat. **18** Healthy fruit trees cannot produce fruit that is bad to eat. Unhealthy fruit trees cannot produce fruit that is good to eat. **19** People chop down every tree that does not produce fruit that is good to eat. Then, they burn those trees **for fuel. In the same way, God will punish everyone who does not do what is right.** **20** Therefore, you can tell if a plant is healthy or unhealthy by what kind of fruit it produces. In the same way, you can tell what people are really like by the things that they do.

21 Just calling me your Lord is not enough for you to participate in God's heavenly kingdom. Rather, you need to do what God my Father, who rules from heaven, wants **you to do**.
22 On the day when God will judge everyone, many people will tell me, 'Our Lord, we represented you when we proclaimed what God says! We represented you when we drove evil spiritual beings out of people! We represented you when we did many powerful things!' **23** I will then respond to them, 'You were never part of my people. You do what is wrong. Leave me!'

24 So, all people who hear my teachings and obey them are acting as wise people who construct their homes on top of solid rock. **25** There may be heavy rain, and there may be floods, and there may be strong winds that buffet those homes. However, they will not collapse. That is because the wise people constructed them on top of solid rock. **26** However, all people who hear my teachings and do not obey them are like foolish people who construct their homes on top of shifting sand. **27** There may be heavy rain, and there may be floods, and there may be strong winds that buffet those homes. Then, they will collapse completely."

28 When Jesus finished teaching, the large groups of people who had listened to him felt amazed at the way he taught. 29 They felt amazed because he did not teach as the teachers of the Jewish law did. Rather, he taught them like someone whom God had authorized to do so.

8 1 When Jesus went down from the hill, large groups of people went wherever he went.

2 Then, a man who had a skin disease came and knelt before Jesus. He said to Jesus, "Lord, please heal me! I know that you are able to heal me if you are willing!"

3 Then Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the man. He said, "I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!" At that time, Jesus healed the man from his skin disease. 4 Then Jesus told him, "Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go and show yourself to a priest so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have the skin disease. Also, present the offering that Moses required for people whom God has healed from skin disease. This will prove to the community that you no longer have the skin disease."

5 While Jesus was visiting the city of Capernaum, an important Roman officer came to him. He urged Jesus to help him. 6 He said, "Lord, one of my servants is lying in bed at my home because he cannot move. He is suffering very much. Please help him."

7 Jesus answered, "I will go to your home and cure him."

8 The important officer responded, "Lord, I am not important enough for you to come into my house. Instead of going to my house, you can cure my servant just by speaking a command. 9 I know that you can do this because I myself am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors. I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, 'Go there!' he goes there. When I say to another one, 'Come here!' he comes to me. When I say to my slave, 'Perform this task!' he does it."

10 What the officer said impressed Jesus. Jesus declared to the people who were with him, "I have not met any Israelite who trusts me as much as this man does! What I have said is true. 11 So, here is what I want to tell you: many people from every part of the world, including many non-Jewish people, will arrive in God's heavenly kingdom. They will feast along with our Jewish ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 12 However, God will cast out many people who think that they will participate in his kingdom. He will punish them in a dark place, where they

will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.” 13 Then, Jesus told the important officer, “Return home. I will do for you what you have trusted me to do.” Jesus healed the servant at that exact time.

14 After that, Jesus went to Peter’s home. There, he saw that Peter’s mother-in-law was lying in bed because she had a fever. 15 He touched her hand, and she recovered from the fever. Then she stood up and offered Jesus some food. 16 When it was evening, people brought to Jesus many men and women whom evil spiritual beings controlled. Jesus drove these evil spiritual beings out of those men and women just by speaking words. Also, he cured everyone who was sick. 17 So, what God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah came true: “When we were sick, he helped us. When we were ill, he cured us.”

18 When Jesus saw that there was a large group of people around him, he told his apprentices to take him **by boat** to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. 19 **Before they got into the boat**, a teacher of the Jewish law came up to Jesus and said to him, “My instructor, I want to go with you and be your apprentice.”

20 Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes in the ground to live in, and birds have nests to live in, but I, the Son of Man, do not have a home to sleep in!”

21 A different person who was one of Jesus’ apprentices said to him, “Lord, let me first go home and stay there until I bury my father. **Then I will go with you**.”

22 Jesus responded, “Come with me and be my apprentice **now**. You cannot help anyone who has died.”

23 After that, Jesus got on the boat, and his apprentices went with him. **They started sailing to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.** 24 **As they were sailing** a strong windstorm developed over the Sea of Galilee! Very high waves were splashing into the boat and filling it, but Jesus was asleep. 25 So Jesus’ apprentices came over to wake him up. They said to him, “Lord, please help us! We are all going to die!”

26 Jesus answered, “You should not be so afraid. You should trust God more than you do!” Then he stood up. He scolded the wind and the water, and everything became calm.

27 What happened impressed the apprentices. They wondered, “What kind of person is Jesus? The wind and the water do what he says!”

28 After that, they arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, in the region where the Gadarene people lived. When they landed, two men whom demons controlled came up to Jesus. They came from the burial caves. They were strong and dangerous. Because of them, no one could travel on the road that went near the burial caves. 29 They shouted to Jesus, “Leave us alone, you who are God’s Son! You should not arrive to punish us before it is the time that God has appointed.” 30 Now there was a large herd of pigs grazing relatively far away from them. 31 The demons pleaded with Jesus, “When you drive us out of these two men, please allow us to control that herd of pigs!”

32 Jesus answered, “I will allow that!” So, the demons left the men and began to control the pigs. Then, the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the Sea of Galilee! They died there in the sea. 33 Then those who were taking care of the pigs ran away. They went to the nearby town, where they told people about everything that had happened, including what had happened to the men whom the demons had controlled. 34 Then many people who lived in that town went to see Jesus! When they met him, they pleaded with him to leave their area.

9 1 After that, Jesus and his apprentices got into a boat. They sailed across the Sea of Galilee and arrived back in the city of Capernaum, where Jesus was living. 2 Some people brought to Jesus a man who could not move! He was lying on a sleeping pad. Jesus perceived that these people believed that he could heal the man. So, he said to the man who could not move, “Do not worry, young man. I forgive you for your sins!”

3 Some teachers of the Jewish law thought to themselves, “He is insulting God!”

4 Jesus realized what they were thinking. He said, “You should not be thinking what is wrong! 5 You may think that it is easy to claim to forgive other people for their sins, since it is difficult to prove whether this has happened. Similarly, you may think that it is difficult to tell someone who cannot move to stand up and walk around, since it is easy to prove whether this has happened. 6 However, I want you to know that God has authorized me, the Son of Man, to

forgive people on earth for their sins." So, he said to the man who could not move, "Stand up, carry your sleeping pad, and go home!" **7** Then, the man stood up and went home. **8** Once the large groups of people **who were near Jesus** saw what had happened, they felt afraid. Also, they praised God for enabling people to do such amazing things.

9 As Jesus was walking away from that place, he noticed a man whom people called Matthew. Matthew was sitting in the booth **where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required**. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my apprentice!" So Matthew stood up and went with him as his apprentice.

10 Later, Jesus was feasting in Matthew's home. Many people who collected taxes and other sinful people arrived! They feasted with Jesus and his apprentices. **11** When the Pharisees saw **what Jesus was doing**, they told Jesus' apprentices, "Your instructor should not be feasting with people who collect taxes and other sinful people."

12 Jesus learned what they said. He answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor. Rather, people who are sick need a doctor. **13** You should study and learn from what God has said in the Scriptures: 'What I most want is that people treat each other mercifully, not that people present offerings to me.' Much like that, I am here not to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. Rather, **I invite** those who know that they have sinned **to come to me**."

14 Sometime later, the apprentices of John the Baptizer visited Jesus. They asked him, "We and the Pharisees frequently do not eat in order to please God. However, your apprentices do not do so. Why not?"

15 Jesus answered, "The friends of the bridegroom do not grieve while the wedding celebration is still going on. However, someday the bridegroom will no longer be with his friends. Then they will not eat. **16** People do not place a piece of unshrunken cloth on old clothing in order to mend a hole. **That is** because**, when they washed the garment,** the new piece of cloth would shrink and completely rip out of the clothing. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! **17** Similarly, people do not put fresh wine into old skin bags **to store it**. If they did that, the skin bags would tear open **because they would not stretch when the fresh wine fermented and expanded**. That would ruin the skin bags, and the wine would spill out. On the contrary, people put fresh wine into new skin bags. That way, they do not ruin the wine and the bags."

18 As Jesus was speaking to John's apprentices, an important man arrived! He knelt before Jesus and said, "My daughter just died. Please come with me and touch her. That way, she will live **again**." **19** Jesus and his apprentices stood up, and they went with the man.

20-21 Now there was a woman who had been suffering for 12 years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. She thought, "Just touching Jesus' robe will cure me." So, she approached Jesus from behind, and she touched the hem of his robe.

22 **After the woman touched Jesus' robe**, Jesus turned around and looked at her. He said to her, "Do not worry, young woman. Because you believed **that I could heal you**, you are now well." At that very moment, the woman became well.

23 After that, Jesus arrived at the important man's home. He saw **people grieving there**. Some people were playing instruments, and many people were making a lot of noise. **24** He said to these people, "Leave! The young woman is not dead! She is only sleeping." Then, the people made fun of him **for saying that**. **25** After those people left, Jesus went **to where the girl was**. He took hold of her hand, and she **became alive again and** stood up. **26** After that, people throughout that whole area heard about what Jesus had done.

27 When Jesus left the important man's house, two men who were blind went with him. They were shouting, "You who are a descendant of King David, help us!"

28 After Jesus entered the house **where he was staying**, the blind men approached him. Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I can heal you?"

They answered, "Yes, Lord, we do!"

29 After **they said that,** he touched their eyes. He declared, "I will do for you what you have trusted me to do." **30** Then, they could see. Jesus sternly told them, "Do not tell anyone about what just happened!" **31** However, after the two men left, they told people throughout that whole area about what Jesus had done.

32 While the two men were leaving, some people brought a man to Jesus! A demon was controlling him and keeping him from speaking. **33** Jesus drove the demon out of the man, and

he was able to speak. What Jesus had done impressed the large groups of people who were nearby. They declared, “We have not seen anything like this before in our country Israel!”

34 However, the Pharisees declared, “It is the leader of the demons who enables this man to drive out demons!”

35 Jesus traveled to many of the cities and towns in that area. He instructed people when they gathered in the Jewish meeting places. He proclaimed the good news about God’s kingdom. He cured people who were sick in any way. 36 Jesus observed that the large groups of people who traveled wherever he went seemed upset and confused. They were like sheep who did not have a sheepherder to lead them and to take care of them. So, Jesus pitied them. 37 So he told his apprentices, “Many people are ready to believe in me, but there are only a few people whom I can send out to help them. 38 So pray to God, who wants all of those people to believe, and plead with him for more people who can go and help them.”

10 1 Then, Jesus told his 12 apprentices to come to him. He authorized them to drive demons out of people and to cure people who were sick in any way. 2 Here is a list of the names of the 12 men whom Jesus chose to represent him: Simon, whom people also call Peter; Andrew, Peter’s younger brother; James, Zebedee’s son; John, James’ younger brother;
3 Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew, a man who collected taxes; James, Alphaeus’ son;
Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who eventually helped to arrest Jesus.

5 Jesus sent those 12 men to represent him. Before they went, he told them, “Do not travel to places where non-Jews live. Do not visit Samaritan towns. 6 Instead, go to your fellow Israelites. They are like sheep who have wandered off and need help. 7 While you are traveling, proclaim to people, ‘God is about to establish his heavenly kingdom here.’ 8 Cure people who are sick. Make people who have died alive again. Heal people with skin diseases. Drive demons out of people. I have not charged you money as I enable you to do these things. So, you should not charge other people money to do these things for them. 9 Do not pack any money to take with you. 10 Do not pack a traveler’s bag, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or a walking stick. I tell you not to bring these things because people who work deserve their food. So, the people whom you help will give you what you need. 11 When you visit a city or town, look

for someone who lives there who welcomes you. When you find such a person, stay in that person's home until you leave that area. 12 When you go into that person's home, say hello to the people who live there and pray that God will make them peaceful. 13 Suppose that the people who live in that house really do welcome you. Then, God will make them peaceful, as you prayed. However, suppose that the people who live in that house do not welcome you. Then, God will not make them peaceful. 14 Whenever people do not welcome you or listen to what you say, you should leave that home or city. As you are going, shake the dust from that place off your feet to show that you reject those people. 15 God will judge and punish any people who reject you more severely than he will judge and punish the wicked people who lived in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. What I have said is true.

16 I am sending you out to represent me to people who will be hostile to you, so you will be like sheep among wolves. Therefore, you need to be as clever as snakes are. You also need to be as innocent as small birds are. 17 Watch out for certain people. They will arrest you and accuse you in front of groups of important people. They will beat you in the Jewish meeting places. 18 Because you are my apprentices, people will accuse you before local rulers and kings. That way, you will tell those rulers and the rest of the non-Jews about me. 19 Whenever people arrest you and accuse you, do not worry about how you will respond. At that time, God will reveal to you what you should say. 20 You can be sure of that because the Holy Spirit, whom God your Father sends, will reveal to you what to say. You will not speak for yourself.

21 Men will have someone arrest their own brothers, and they will ask the judge to execute them. Fathers will do the same thing to their own children. Children will rebel against their parents and cause them to die. 22 Because you are my apprentices, many people will be hostile to you. However, if you persevere in being my apprentices while people harm you, God will rescue you. 23 When people in one city try to harm you, you should quickly travel to another city. You should do that because I, the Son of Man, will return before you have proclaimed the good news in every town in Israel. What I have said is true.

24 Apprentices are not greater than their teacher. Similarly, servants are not greater than their master. 25 Those apprentices should be content when they become like their teacher. Similarly, those servants should be content when they become like their master. Since people called the person who leads the family Satan, they will also call the people who are part of the

family bad names. 26 So then, do not be afraid of those people. I say that because someday God will let everyone know everything people are trying to hide. 27 You should declare publicly everything I have said to you privately. You should shout for everyone to hear what you have heard me say quietly. 28 Do not be afraid of people. They can kill you physically, but they cannot kill you spiritually. Instead, you should be afraid of God. He can destroy you both spiritually and physically in hell. 29 Think about the sparrows. They have so little value that you can buy two of them for only one small coin. However, God your Father knows about it whenever one sparrow dies. 30 God even knows how many hairs there are on your head.
31 So, do not be afraid, because you are more precious to God than many sparrows.

32 If people tell others that they are my apprentices, then I will say to God my Father, who rules from heaven, that those people are my apprentices. 33 However, if they tell others that they are not my apprentices, then I will say to God my Father, who rules from heaven, that those people are not my apprentices.

34 You should not think that I am here so that people will live together peacefully. Indeed, I am here so that people quarrel, not so that they live peacefully. 35 In fact, I am here so that family members oppose each other. A man will oppose his father. A woman will oppose her mother. A woman who married a man will oppose her husband's mother. 36 People who are part of a person's family will be those who oppose that person.

37 People who care for their fathers or mothers more than they care for me are not behaving as my apprentices should. People who care for their sons or daughters more than they care for me are not behaving as my apprentices should. 38 People who are not willing to suffer or die, as if they were carrying their own crosses, when they come with me as my apprentices are not behaving as my apprentices should. 39 People who do anything to stay alive will not truly live. However, people who are willing to die because they are my apprentices will truly live.

40 When people welcome you, it is the same as welcoming me. When people welcome me, it is the same as welcoming God the Father, who sent me here. 41 As for those who welcome someone because they know that person speaks for God, God will reward them in the same way that he rewards people who speak for him. As for those who welcome someone because

they know that person does what is right, God will reward them in the same way that he rewards people who do what is right. **42** As for those who offer an unimportant person cold water to drink just because they know that person is my apprentice, God will most certainly reward them. What I have said is true."

11 **1** So, Jesus completed instructing his 12 apprentices **about what they should do**. Then, he left that place in order to proclaim **the good news to people** in the towns throughout the area.

2 Meanwhile, John the Baptizer was in jail. People told him about what **Jesus** the Messiah was doing. So, he sent some of his apprentices **3** to ask Jesus, "Are you the one whom **God promised** would come, or should we be waiting for someone else?"

4 So Jesus answered John's apprentices, "Go back and tell John what you have heard and seen. **5** People who were blind are now seeing. People who could not walk are now walking. People who had skin diseases no longer have them. People who were deaf can now hear. People who were dead are alive again. I am proclaiming good news to poor people. **6** God will bless anyone who **sees what I do and hears what I teach and** continues to believe in me."

7 When John's apprentices left, Jesus started to talk to the large groups of people about John. He said, "Surely you did not travel to John in the desolate area to see someone who often changed his mind, who was like the thin stalk of a plant that the wind shakes. **8** Surely you did not travel **to the desolate area** to see someone who wore fancy clothes. You know very well that the people who wear fancy clothes live in palaces**, not in desolate areas**. **9** Surely you traveled **to the desolate area** to see a man who spoke for God. Yes**, that is who John is**! But I want to tell you that John is more significant than other people who speak for God. **10** He is the one about whom a prophet wrote in the Scriptures:

'Listen, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will make things ready for when you come.'

11 Of all the people who have ever lived, there has been no one more important than John the Baptizer. However, the most insignificant people who participate in God's heavenly kingdom are more important than John. What I have said is true. **12** From the time when John the Baptizer began to preach publicly until this time, people have attacked God's heavenly

kingdom. Indeed, violent people try to conquer it. 13 Further, before John began to preach, the
laws that God gave Moses and the things that the prophets wrote predicted what is now
happening. 14 In fact, if you trust what I say, you can know that John is the one whom God
promised would come, the one who is like the prophet Elijah. 15 You should think carefully
about what you just heard me say!

16 I will tell you what you people who live in this time period are like. You are like children
playing games in an open area. They call out to their friends, 17 'We played happy music for
you on the flute, but you did not dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you did
not grieve!' 18 Similarly, when John came to you and often did not eat or drink, people
rejected him and said, 'A demon is controlling him!' 19 But when I, the Son of Man, came to
you and I enjoyed food and drink, people rejected me and said, 'Look! This man eats too much
food and drinks too much wine, and he associates with people who collect taxes and other
sinful people!' But those who are wise themselves recognize that what John and I do is also
wise."

20 Now people who lived in the towns where Jesus had done many powerful things did not
stop doing what was wrong. So, Jesus began to scold them: 21 "How terrible it will be for you
people who live in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida! I say this because I did powerful
things while I was in your cities. If I had done those same powerful things in the ancient cities
of Tyre and Sidon, the wicked people who lived there would have stopped doing what was
wrong. They would have shown how sorry they were by wearing coarse clothing and putting
ashes on their heads. 22 So I want to tell you that when God judges everyone, he will punish
you more severely than the wicked people who lived in Tyre and Sidon. 23 I also have
something to say to you people who live in the town of Capernaum. You may think that God is
going to give you great rewards. No, God is not going to reward you at all! I say this because I
did powerful things while I was in your town. If I had done those same powerful things in the
city of Sodom, the wicked people who lived there would have stopped doing what was wrong, and
God would not have destroyed them. 24 So I want to tell you that when God judges everyone,
he will punish you more severely than the wicked people who lived in the region of Sodom."

25 Then Jesus responded by praying, "God my Father, you are Lord over everything you
have made. I praise you that you have prevented people who think they are smart from

understanding things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept **what you say** as readily as little children do. **26** That is true, my Father, and you have done that because it pleased you to do so."

27 **Then Jesus told the people who were there,** "God, my Father, has given everything to me. Only my Father really knows me, his Son. And only I, his Son, really know my Father. But I do choose to show some people who he is. **28** Many of you feel tired and are struggling. Become my apprentices! I will enable you to rest. **29** I am not forceful or proud, and I will help you to rest. So, do what I command and listen to what I teach. **30** **I say that** because you can easily do what I command. Indeed, you can easily do what I ask you to do."

12 **1** Some time later, Jesus **and his apprentices** were walking through grain fields during one of the Jewish days of rest. His apprentices became hungry, so they started to pick some grain and eat it. **2** Some Pharisees saw **the apprentices picking grain**. They said to Jesus, "Look! Your apprentices are working on the Jewish day of rest. Our law forbids us to do that."

3 Jesus replied, "Consider the story in the Scriptures about what King David did when he and the men who were with him became very hungry. **4** As you know, David entered the sacred tent. He ate some of the bread that had been on display before God, even though the law prohibited him and the men who were with him from doing that. Only priests could eat that bread. **5** Likewise, consider the laws in the Scriptures that permit priests to work during the Jewish days of rest because they are serving in the Jewish sanctuary. **6** However, I want you to know that there is now something even more important than the Jewish sanctuary. **7** Suppose that you truly understood what God has said in the Scriptures: 'What I most want is that people treat each other mercifully, not that people present offerings to me.' Then, you would not have declared **my apprentices** guilty when they have actually not disobeyed **the laws about the Jewish day of rest**. **8** **I say those things** because I, the Son of Man, can decide **what is right for people to do** during the Jewish day of rest!"

9 Then Jesus left the grain fields and visited one of the Jewish meeting places. **10** Now there was a man there who could not move his hand. The Pharisees wanted to accuse Jesus **of disobeying the laws about not working on the Sabbath**. So, they asked Jesus, "Does our law allow us to cure **people from their diseases** during Jewish days of rest?"

11 Jesus replied, “Suppose that one of you had a single sheep. Also suppose that this sheep fell into a deep hole on a Jewish day of rest. You would certainly pull it out of the hole, even though this would be doing work on the Jewish day of rest! **12** Therefore, since people are more important than sheep, you should help others even more than you help sheep on Jewish days of rest. So then, the laws that God gave Moses allow people to do what is good on Jewish days of rest.” **13** After saying that, Jesus commanded the man, “Extend the hand that you cannot move!” The man extended his hand, and he could move it just as well as his other hand.
14 Then the Pharisees left the Jewish meeting place. They started planning how they could kill Jesus.

15 Jesus knew that the Pharisees were planning to kill him. So, he left that area. Many people went with him, and he cured all of them who were sick. **16** Jesus commanded them strongly that they should not tell other people about him. **17** So, what God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah came true:

> **18** “Consider the one who serves me, whom I selected.
> I love him, and what he does pleases me.
> I will empower him with the Holy Spirit.
> He will declare to the non-Jews that I do what is right.
> **19** He will not quarrel with people. He will not shout loudly.
> He will not speak to many people in public areas.
> **20** He will be gentle with weak people.
> He will be kind to feeble people.
> He will do those things until he successfully completes doing what is right.
> **21** Non-Jewish people will confidently trust in him.”

22 After that, some people brought a man to Jesus. A demon was controlling him and keeping him from seeing or speaking. Jesus cured the man, and he was able to speak and see.
23 What Jesus had done impressed all the large groups of people who were nearby. They declared to each other, “Perhaps this man is the special descendant of King David.”

24 However, the Pharisees heard them saying that. They responded, “This man forces out demons only because Beelzebul, who rules the demons, enables him to do so.”

25 Jesus realized what they were thinking. So he said to them, “When the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. When people who live in the same town or household fight against each other, that town or household will not last.
26 Suppose that Satan enabled people to force out his own demons. In that case, he would be fighting against himself. So, he would soon cease to rule over the demons! **27** Further, suppose that Beelzebul is enabling me to force out demons. Then, it must also be true that he is enabling your apprentices to force out demons. **But you know that is not true.** So your own apprentices prove that you are wrong. **28** Actually, the Holy Spirit enables me to force out demons. That means that God is establishing his kingdom among you. **29** Before thieves can break into the home of a strong man and take his belongings, they must first tie up the strong man. After that, they can take the belongings from his home.

30 Anyone who is not supporting me is opposing me. Anyone who is not bringing people to me is sending them away from me.

31 So then, here is what I want to tell you: God will forgive many people who sin in many ways or say bad things **about God or others**. However, God will not forgive people who say bad things about the Holy Spirit. **32** Further, God will forgive people who say bad things about me, the Son of Man. However, God will not forgive people who say bad things about the Holy Spirit. **He will** not **forgive them** right now or at any later time.

33 You must decide either that both a tree and its fruit are healthy or that both a tree and its fruit are unhealthy. **I say that** because you can tell if a tree is healthy or unhealthy by what kind of fruit it produces. Similarly, you can tell what people are really like by the things that they do. **34** You people are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! Because you are wicked, you cannot say anything good. **I say that** because people speak based on what they are thinking about. **35** Good people say good things because they think good things. Evil people say evil things because they think evil things. **36** Here is what I want you to know: when God judges everyone, he will hold people responsible for all the useless things that they have said. **37** In fact, God will declare that you are either innocent or guilty based on what you have said.”

38 After **Jesus said those things**, some teachers of the Jewish law and some Pharisees responded, “Instructor, we want to see you perform a miracle **that proves that God sent you**.”

39 Then Jesus replied to them, “You people who are alive right now are wicked and faithless. You want me to do a miracle **that proves that God sent me**. However, the only miracle you will see is a miracle like the one that happened to the prophet Jonah. 40 **A huge fish swallowed Jonah, and** he was inside this fish for three whole days. **Then, God had the fish spit him out.** Similarly, people will bury me, the Son of Man, and I will be in a tomb for three whole days. **Then, I will live again.** 41 The people who lived in the ancient city of Nineveh stopped sinning when Jonah preached to them. And now there is something even more important than **the prophet** Jonah. **However, you have not stopped sinning.** Therefore, when God judges everyone, the people who lived in Nineveh will stand up and condemn the people who are alive right now. 42 Long ago the Queen of Sheba traveled a great distance to listen to the wise things that King Solomon said. And now there is something even more important than Solomon. **However, you have not really listened to what I say.** Therefore, when God judges everyone, she will stand up and condemn the people who are alive right now.

43 Listen to this story: an evil spirit leaves someone and wanders around in desolate areas looking for someone else to live in. However, it does not find anyone there. 44 After that, it says **to itself**, ‘I am going to go back to the person I used to live in!’ So it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that someone has cleaned and organized, but no one is living in it. 45 Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is. They all enter that person and begin living in him. That person experienced bad things before, but now he will experience worse things. Something like that is what you wicked people who are alive right now will experience.”

46 As Jesus was saying those things to the large groups of people, his mother and his **younger** brothers **arrived and** waited outside **where he was**. They wanted to talk with him. 47 A person told him, “Your mother and your **younger** brothers are waiting outside. They want to talk with you.”

48 Jesus replied, “I will tell you whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers.” 49 He pointed to his apprentices and said, “These are the people whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers! 50 In fact, when a person does what God my Father, who rules from heaven, wants, I consider that person to be my brother or sister or mother.”

13 1 That same day, Jesus left the house where he had been teaching. He walked to the Sea of Galilee and sat down to teach next to it. 2 Then large groups of people came to where Jesus was. Because there were so many people, he got into a boat and sat down there to teach. All the people stood on the shore of the Sea of Galilee to listen to him.

3 Jesus began to use stories to instruct them about many things. He said, “Listen to this: a farmer began to plant some grain seeds. 4 As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds flew down and ate those seeds up. 5 Other seeds fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. Because they were growing in shallow soil, the seeds sprouted very quickly. 6 However, the sun shone on the new plants and dried them up. Then, because they did not have good roots, the plants died. 7 Other seeds fell onto an area full of thorny plants. These thorny plants grew quickly and crowded out the grain plants. 8 Finally, other seeds fell on fertile soil. They sprouted, and the plants produced a crop. Some plants produced 100 grains of wheat each, others produced 60 grains each, and others produced 30 grains each. 9 You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!”

10 Then, the apprentices came to Jesus and asked him, “Why do you use stories to instruct these people?”

11 Jesus replied, “God has revealed to you hidden things about his heavenly kingdom. However, he has not revealed those things to these people. 12 I say that because God will reveal even more to people who already know some things about God’s heavenly kingdom. They will know many things. In contrast, God will cause people who know very little about God’s heavenly kingdom to know nothing about it at all. 13 I use stories to instruct these people because they can look at things, but they do not really see them. They can hear what people say, but they do not really listen to it or learn from it. 14 What God said by speaking through the prophet Isaiah has come true for them:

> ‘You will hear things, but you will not learn from them.
> You will look at things, but you will not really see them.
> 15 These people do not understand because they have become stubborn;
> their ears are almost deaf;

and they have closed their eyes because they do not want to see.
They do not want to listen
or try to understand,
for then they would come back to me,
and I would welcome and forgive them.'

16 However, it is very good for you, because you really see. **It is very good** for you, because you really listen. **17** Indeed, many people who spoke for God and other people who did what was right would have wanted to see the things that you are seeing me do. But they did not get to see them**, because they lived long ago**. They would have wanted to hear the things that I have said to you. But they did not get to hear them**, because they lived long ago**. What I have said is true.

18 So then, listen to **me explain** the story about the farmer who planted grain seeds.
19 Some people hear the message about God's kingdom, but they do not learn from it. Then Satan comes and takes the message they heard away from their minds. These people are like the seeds that fell on the path. **20** Other people are like the seeds that fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. When they hear the message **about God's kingdom**, they rejoice and quickly believe it. **21** However, they are like plants without good roots, which do not live very long. In fact, when bad things happen or when people hurt them because they accepted the message **about God's kingdom**, they quickly stop believing it. **22** Other people are like the seeds that fell onto an area full of thorny plants. After they hear the message **about God's kingdom**, they continue to focus on things in this world and on becoming rich, even though being rich is not as helpful as they think it will be. Focusing on these things makes the message ineffective, just as thorny plants crowd out the good plants and keep them from producing a crop. **23** Other people are like the seeds that fell on fertile soil. When they hear the message **about God's kingdom**, they learn from it. They are like the plants that produced a crop. Some plants produced 100 **grains of wheat each**, others produced 60 **grains each**, and others produced 30 **grains each**."

24 Then Jesus told the people another story. He said, "Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a farmer planted some fertile grain seeds in his field. **25** However, as the farmer and his workers were asleep, someone who hated the farmer went into the field and

planted weed seeds among the grain seeds. Then, he left **before the farmer and his workers woke up**. **26** Some time later, the wheat plants sprouted and began to produce grain. At the same time, the weed plants also **sprouted, and the workers** noticed them. **27** So, the workers reported this to the farmer. They said, 'Sir, we know that you planted fertile seeds in your field. However, weed plants are growing there!'

28 The farmer replied, 'A person who hates me planted these weed plants.'

Then his servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go **to the field** and remove all the weeds plants?'

29 He answered, 'Do not do that. If you did, you might remove some of the wheat plants while you were removing the weed plants, since they are growing together. **30** Allow the wheat and weed plants to grow in the field together until we begin to harvest them. Then, I will command the people who are harvesting, "Pull up the weed plants first. Collect them in groups and burn them. After that, harvest the wheat plants and store the grain in my storehouse."'"

31 Then Jesus told the people another story. He said, "Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a man plants a tiny mustard seed in his field. **32** This kind of seed is smaller than other kinds of seeds. However, after it sprouts, the plant becomes a tree that is bigger than other plants that people grow. In fact, birds land on its branches and make nests there."

33 Then Jesus told the people another story. **He said,** "Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a woman measured out some yeast and mixed it with about 25 kilograms of flour. The yeast made the whole batch of dough swell up."

34 Jesus used stories to teach all these things to the large groups of people **who were standing on the shore of the sea**. In fact, he taught them by using stories only. **35** So, what God said by speaking through one of the prophets came true:

> "I will speak by using stories.
> I will reveal things that have been secret since **God** created everything."

36 After **speaking these stories**, Jesus departed from the large groups of people and entered the house **where he was staying**. His apprentices went to him and asked, "Please teach us what the story about the weed plants in the field means."

37 Jesus replied, “The farmer who planted some fertile grain seeds is like me, the Son of
Man. 38 The field is like the world. The fertile grain seeds are like people who participate in
God’s kingdom. The weed plants are like people who obey Satan. 39 The person who hated the
farmer and planted the weed seeds is like the devil. The time when the workers begin to
harvest the grain is like when this time period will end. The people who are harvesting are like
angels. 40 The workers collect the weed plants and burn them. That is like what will happen
when this time period ends. 41 I, the Son of Man, will have my angels collect everything that
causes people to sin and everyone who does what is wrong. They will remove those things and
people from my kingdom. 42 Then, the angels will cast those things and people into hell,
which is like a burning oven. There people will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth. 43 After
that, the people who did what was right will live in God their Father’s kingdom. They will be
as glorious as the sun when it shines. You should think carefully about what you just heard me
say!

44 Here is what God’s heavenly kingdom is like: A man discovered a secret treasure in a
field. He was very happy, but he put the treasure back into its secret place. He went home and
sold everything that he owned. Then, he bought the field so that he could have the treasure in it.

45 Here is what God’s heavenly kingdom is also like: a trader wanted some valuable
pearls. 46 Eventually, he saw a very expensive pearl. He went home and sold everything that
he owned. Then, he bought that pearl.

47 Here is what God’s heavenly kingdom is also like: people used a net to catch fish in a
lake. They caught many kinds of fish. 48 When the net was full of fish, the people pulled it
onto the shore. They sat down to sort through the fish that they had caught. They put the edible
fish into buckets and threw away the useless fish. 49 That is like what will happen when this
time period ends. Angels will come, and they will divide people who do what is wrong from
people who do what is right. 50 Then, the angels will cast the people who do what is wrong
into hell, which is like a burning oven. There they will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.

51 Do you know what all these things that I have taught you mean?”

The apprentices answered, “Yes, we know what they mean.”

52 Jesus responded, “So then, consider teachers whose leader has trained them to participate in God’s heavenly kingdom. They are like people who manage households. That is because both the teachers and the people who manage households offer old and new things that are valuable.”

53 So, Jesus completed telling these stories. Then, he left that place. 54 Then Jesus traveled to the city of Nazareth, where he had grown up. He instructed the people there when they gathered in the Jewish meeting place. What he said impressed them, and they said to each other, “We do not know how this man became so wise and powerful. 55 He is just the woodworker’s son. His mother’s name is Mary, and his younger brothers are James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. 56 All his sisters live here in our town. So, we do not know how this man learned to do these things.”

57 These people rejected Jesus. So, Jesus told them, “The only ones who do not respect people who speak for God are those from where they grew up and their own families.”
58 Since the people did not trust in him, Jesus did very few powerful things in that place.

14 1 While Jesus was teaching and doing powerful things, King Herod Antipas, the ruler over the region of Galilee, learned what he was doing. 2 He told his attendants, “This man must be John the Baptizer. God has made him alive again, and that is why he does these powerful things.”

3-4 Herod said that because John had already died. Here is how that happened: Herod married Herodias, who had previously been the wife of Herod’s brother Philip. John the Baptizer told Herod, “Our law forbids you to marry Herodias, your sister-in-law.” So, Herod told his soldiers to arrest John. They tied him up and put him in jail. 5 However, Herod was afraid of the large group of people who believed that John spoke for God. So, even though he wanted to have his soldiers execute John, he did not do that.

6 Sometime later, during Herod’s birthday party, Herodias’ daughter danced for him and his guests. Herod greatly enjoyed her dancing. 7 So, he solemnly promised that he would give her whatever she wanted. 8 Her mother, Herodias, had already told her what to ask for. So, she said to Herod, “I want you to cut off John the Baptizer’s head and bring it to me here on a

plate!” **9** King Herod was sad **about what she asked for**. However, because he had solemnly promised in front of all his guests **to give her what she asked for**, he told one of his men to do what she asked. **10** He had the man go to the jail and cut off John’s head there. **11** Then, the man put John’s head on a plate and gave it to Herodias’ daughter. She gave it to her mother. **12** Later, John’s apprentices went to the jail. They took John’s dead body and buried it. Then, they went to Jesus and told him what had happened.

13 After Jesus heard **that John was dead**, he sailed **with his apprentices** in a boat on the Sea of Galilee to a place where no one lived. Then, the large groups of people learned **that he had traveled there**. They left their towns and walked around the Sea of Galilee to join him. **14** When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large group of people. He pitied them, and he cured those who were sick.

15 When it was evening, the apprentices approached Jesus. They said to him, “This is a place where no one lives, and it is very late in the day. So, please tell the large groups of people to walk to the small towns that are nearby, where they can buy food to eat.”

16 Jesus replied, “They do not need to leave **to buy food**. I want you to provide them with food to eat!”

17 The apprentices replied, “We have very little food! We only have five loaves of bread and two fish.”

18 Then Jesus said, “Bring those things to me.” **19** Jesus told the large groups of people to sit down on the ground. He picked up the five loaves of bread and the two fish. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his apprentices. They distributed them to the large groups of people. **20** Everyone ate **the bread**, and they all had enough to eat. Then the apprentices gathered the food that was left. They filled 12 large containers with the leftovers! **21** About 5,000 men ate **the bread**, and there were women and children there too!

22 As soon as **everyone was done eating**, Jesus had his apprentices get into a boat and sail across **the Sea of Galilee** without him. He stayed behind to tell the large groups of people to go home. **23** After he told the large groups of people to go home, he climbed to the top of a hill to pray **to God** by himself. When it became dark, he was on top of the hill by himself.

24 Meanwhile, the apprentices were on the boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The wind was blowing from where they wanted to go, so many waves were striking the boat. **25** Later, soon before morning, Jesus joined them. He was walking on top of the Sea of Galilee!
26 When the apprentices saw Jesus walking on top of the Sea of Galilee, it disturbed them. **They did not know that it was Jesus, so** they said **to each other** that he must be a dangerous spiritual being. They were so afraid that they shouted loudly. **27** As soon as **they shouted loudly**, Jesus said to them, "Do not worry! I am **Jesus**. Stop being afraid!"

28 Peter replied, "My Lord, please show me that it is really you. I ask that you tell me to walk on top of the water to you!"

29 Jesus said **to Peter**, "Walk to me!"

So, Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on top of the water toward Jesus.
30 However, Peter realized how powerful the storm was, and he was afraid. Then he started to sink into the water. He shouted **to Jesus**, "My Lord, please rescue me!"

31 As soon as **Peter shouted**, Jesus reached out and lifted Peter up out of the water. Then he said to Peter, "You should not have been unsure **that I could make you walk on top of the water**. You should trust God more than you do!"

32 Then Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat. At that moment, the wind stopped blowing.
33 Then the apprentices who were in the boat worshiped Jesus. They declared, "You really are God's Son!"

34 After they finished sailing across the Sea of Galilee, they landed on the shore in the region of Gennesaret. **35** The men in that region recognized Jesus. So they sent people to the nearby areas **to say that Jesus had arrived**. Then people **from those areas** brought to Jesus many others who were sick. **36** Those who were sick asked Jesus to allow them just to touch the hem of his robe. Everyone who did so became healthy.

15 **1** After that, some Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law who were from the city of Jerusalem visited Jesus. They told him, **2** "Your apprentices do not cleanse their hands before

they eat. So, they are disobeying the teachings we received from our ancestors. They should not do that!"

3 Jesus replied, "Sometimes you use the teachings that you received to disobey the laws that God gave us. You should not do that! **4** For example, God gave this law: 'Treat your parents respectfully.' He also gave this law: 'Execute anyone who insults his or her parents.' **5** However, you tell people that they can say to their parents, 'I have given to God everything that I could have used to provide for you.' **6** Then, you tell these people that they cannot treat their parents respectfully by providing for them. In that way, you use the teachings that you received to ignore what God commanded. **7** You say that you obey God, but you really do not! Isaiah the prophet was right when God spoke through him about you,

> **8** 'You people treat me respectfully when you talk,
> but you do not really care about me.
> **9** When you worship me, it is useless.
> That is because you use only what humans have commanded to instruct others.'"

10 Then Jesus told the large group of people to come to him. He told them, "Listen to what I am about to say and learn from it. **11** Whatever people eat cannot make them unclean. Rather, it is what people say that makes them unclean."

12 Later, his apprentices went to him and asked him, "We want you to know that the Pharisees heard what you said and became very upset."

13 Jesus replied, "Those Pharisees are like plants that God my Father, who rules from heaven, did not plant. He will punish them in the same way that he would tear up such plants. **14** Do not listen to them. They do not know what they should be teaching. They are like blind people who guide other blind people right into a hole in the ground."

15 Peter replied, "Please tell us what that story means." **16** Jesus answered, "You too have not yet learned what I mean. **17** I want you to realize that everything that people eat simply goes into their stomachs. Eventually, their bodies expel what they ate into toilets. **18** What actually makes people unclean is what they say, which shows what they think and care about. **19** In fact, it is because of what people think and care about that they think evil things, kill

others, are sexually unfaithful to their spouses, have improper sex, steal things, speak what is untrue, and say bad things **about God or others**. **20** It is doing those things that makes people unclean. However, when people do not cleanse their hands before they eat, that does not make them unclean."

21 After that, Jesus **and his apprentices** left the region of Gennesaret. They traveled to the areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. **22** Then, a non-Jewish woman who was from those areas visited Jesus. She called out to him, "My Lord, you who are a descendant of King David, help me! A demon is controlling my daughter and making her suffer."

23 However, Jesus did not say anything to her. Then his apprentices came to him and said, "This woman is **bothering us by** following us and calling out to you. Please tell her to go home."

24 Jesus answered them, "God told me to go only to my fellow Israelites. They are like sheep who have wandered off **and need help**."

25 Then the woman approached Jesus. She knelt down in front of him and pled, "My Lord, please help me!"

26 Jesus replied, "Suppose that someone takes food for children and gives it to dogs instead. That is not appropriate! **That is why I am not helping you.**"

27 The woman replied, "My Lord, what you say is correct. In fact, though, dogs do eat leftovers that their owners spill on the ground. **What I am asking you to do is like those leftovers.**"

28 When **he heard that,** Jesus told her, "You have impressed me because you trust me very much! I will do for you what you want me to do." At that very moment, Jesus cured her daughter.

29 After that, Jesus **and his apprentices** left **the areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon**. They traveled to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus went up on a hill and sat down. **30** Large groups of people came to him. They brought people who could not walk, people who could not see, people who could not use their hands normally, people who could not speak, and people who were sick in many other ways. They set these people down in front of Jesus. Then, Jesus

cured these people. **31** The large group of people saw **what Jesus had done**. People who could not talk were now speaking. People who could not use their hands normally were now able to do so. People who could not walk were now walking. People who could not see were now seeing. What Jesus had done impressed the large group of people. They praised the God whom the Israelites worship.

32 After that, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He said to them, "I pity the large group of people. They have already spent three days with me, and they do not have any food to eat. Further, I do not want to tell them to go home while they are hungry, because then they might pass out while they are walking home."

33 The apprentices replied, "In this place where no one lives, we certainly do not have enough food for this large group of people to have enough to eat!"

34 Jesus asked them, "How many loaves of bread do you have with you?"

They replied, "We have with us seven loaves of bread and a few little fish."

35 Then Jesus told the large group of people to sit down on the ground. **36** He picked up the seven loaves of bread and the fish. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his apprentices. They distributed them to the large group of people. **37** Everyone ate **the bread**, and they all had enough to eat. Then the apprentices gathered the food that was left. They filled seven large containers with the leftovers! **38** **About** 4,000 men ate **the bread**, and there were women and children there too! **39** After he told the large group of people to go home, Jesus climbed into a boat. He **and his apprentices** sailed to the areas near the town of Magadan.

16 **1** Some Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus in order to investigate him. They said to him, "We want you to perform a miracle that shows that God sent you."

2 He answered them, "[When it is evening and the sky looks red, you know that there will be good weather **the next day**. **3** When it is morning and the sky looks red and cloudy, **you know that** there will be storms that day. So, you realize what it means when the sky looks a certain way. However, you do not **realize** what God is doing right now.] **4** You people who are

alive right now are wicked and faithless. You want me to do a miracle **that proves that God sent me**. However, the only miracle you will see is a miracle like the one that happened to **the prophet** Jonah." Then Jesus **and his apprentices** departed from the Pharisees and Sadducees.

5 They sailed to the other side **of the Sea of Galilee**. Then, the apprentices realized that they had not remembered to take any bread with them. **6** At that point, Jesus said to them, "Be alert and watch out for the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees use."

7 Then the apprentices told each other, "**He must have said that** because we did not take any bread with us."

8 Jesus realized **what they were saying to each other**. He told them, "You should not be telling each other that you do not have bread. You should trust God more than you do! **9** You should already remember and understand how I fed 5,000 men with just five loaves of bread. Then you gathered the food that was left into **12** large containers. **10** **You should also remember and understand** how I fed 4,000 men with just seven loaves of bread. Then you gathered the food that was left into **seven** large containers. **11** I want you to understand that I am speaking about bread in a figurative way. So **I say again**, watch out for the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees use." **12** After **Jesus said that**, the apprentices realized that **he was telling them to watch out for** what the Pharisees and Sadducees were teaching. He was not telling them to watch out for the yeast that people use to make bread.

13 Sometime later, Jesus **and his apprentices** arrived in the area near the city of Caesarea Philippi. Then Jesus asked his apprentices, "Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, really am?"

14 The apprentices replied, "People say that you are one of the prophets **who has come back to life**. **More specifically,** some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Other people say that you are the prophet Elijah. Other people say that you are the prophet Jeremiah."

15 Jesus asked, "As for you, who do you say that I really am?"

16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Messiah! You are the Son of the only real God."

17 Jesus responded, “Simon, descendant of Jonah, God my Father, who rules from heaven, has blessed you. He has made known to you what you said. In fact, no human could have made it known to you. **18** I also want you to know that I will make you become like your name, Peter, which means ‘rock.’ I will make you like a foundation stone on which I will construct a building, which represents everyone who believes in me. Even when those people die, that will not destroy them. **19** I will commission you to oversee God’s heavenly kingdom. When you confirm something here on earth, God will confirm it in heaven. When you nullify something here on earth, God will nullify it in heaven.” **20** After that, Jesus ordered the apprentices not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

21 From then on, Jesus the Messiah began to teach his apprentices that he had to travel to the city of Jerusalem. There, the Jewish leaders, the ruling priests, and the teachers of the Jewish law would hurt him very much and have people kill him. During the third day after he died, God would make him alive again. **22** Then Peter spoke to Jesus privately. He began to scold Jesus, “My Lord, do not say those things! What you have spoken about will never happen to you.”

23 Then Jesus faced Peter. He said, “Do not try to stop me. You are behaving as Satan does! You are thinking about what humans care about instead of thinking about what God cares about. Because of that, you are trying to make me do what is wrong.”

24 Next, Jesus said to all his apprentices, “People who want to come with me and be my apprentices must refuse to do what they want to do. They must be willing to suffer or die, as if they were carrying their own crosses, when they come with me as my apprentices. **25** **That is** because people who are willing to do anything to stay alive will not truly live. However, people who are willing to die because they are my apprentices will truly live. **26** Suppose that some people acquire everything they could possibly want. However, they can no longer truly live. That is not worth it! People cannot acquire anything that is as valuable as truly living. **27** **That is important** because I, the Son of Man, will soon return with my angels. I will be as glorious as God my Father. At that time, I will **justly** reward or punish people for whatever they have done.

28 Some of you who are here with me will definitely see me, the Son of Man, ruling over my kingdom before you die. What I have said is true.”

17 **1** Six days later, Jesus climbed up a tall mountain. He had Peter, James, and James' younger brother John go with him. No one else was with them. **2** Then, the three apprentices saw Jesus change how he appeared. His face became as radiant as the sun. His clothes became bright white. **3** After that, Moses and Elijah, who were prophets from long ago, appeared to the three apprentices! These prophets were speaking to Jesus.

4 Peter responded by saying to Jesus, "My Lord, it is appropriate for all of us to be here. If you want me to, I will build three shelters. You, Moses, and Elijah can each use one." **5** As Peter was talking, a radiant cloud covered all of them! Then God spoke from the cloud! He declared, "This man is my Son, the one whom I love dearly. What he does pleases me. Do what he says."

6 After the three apprentices heard that, they became extremely afraid. They kneeled down to worship God. **7** Then Jesus came close to them. He touched them and told them, "Stand up! Stop being afraid!" **8** When they looked up, the only person whom they saw was Jesus.

9 While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Do not tell anyone about what you just saw until I, the Son of Man, live again."

10 Then, those three apprentices asked Jesus, "The teachers of the Jewish law tell us that the prophet Elijah has to be here before the Messiah gets here. Are they right about that? We ask because we just saw the prophet Elijah."

11 Jesus replied, "They are right that the prophet Elijah has to be here and that he will make everything as it should be. **12** Now here is what I want you to know: the prophet Elijah has been here already. However, people did not realize that it was Elijah. Instead, they treated him badly. Further, they are about to hurt me, the Son of Man, in similar ways." **13** After that, the three apprentices realized that Jesus was telling them that the person he called Elijah was John the Baptizer.

14 When the four of them returned to the large group of people, a man came up to Jesus and bowed down in front of him. **15** He said to Jesus, "My lord, please help my son! He is very

sick and has seizures. He frequently falls into fires or bodies of water. **16** I took him here to your apprentices in order that they might cure him. However, they were not able to do so."

17 Jesus responded, "You people who are alive right now do not believe or think properly. It is hard for me to live here with you. It is difficult for me to be patient with you." Then he said to them, "Bring the man's son here to me!" **18** Then, Jesus commanded the demon who was controlling the man's son to stop doing so. The demon obeyed and left him. At that very moment, Jesus cured the man's son.

19 Later, the apprentices came to Jesus when they were alone. They asked him, "Why could we not drive out that demon?"

20 He answered, "You could not drive it out because you trust in God so little. Suppose that you trusted God even a little bit, as little as a tiny mustard seed. Then, you could tell the mountain we just walked down to go from one place to another, and it would do so. You could do anything! What I have said is true. **21** [1] [Now you can only drive out this type of demon by praying and by not eating in order to please God.]"

22 Sometime later, the apprentices met together in the region of Galilee. Jesus told them, "Soon somebody will help my enemies arrest me, the Son of Man. **23** They will have people kill me. Then, during the third day after I died, God will make me alive again." When they heard that, the apprentices became very sad.

24 Later, Jesus and his apprentices went to the city of Capernaum. Some people who collected taxes for the temple came up to Peter. They asked him, "Your instructor pays the tax for the temple, right?"

25 Peter answered, "Yes, he does pay it."

Then Peter went into the house where Jesus was staying. Before Peter could say anything, Jesus said to him, "Simon, tell me what you think. Who has to pay taxes to the kings who rule in this world? Do their own children have to pay taxes? Or do people whom the kings do not know have to pay taxes?"

26 Peter replied, "People whom the kings do not know have to pay taxes."

Then Jesus said to him, “So then, the children of kings do not have to pay anything. That means that we do not have to pay anything either. 27 However, we do not want to upset the people who collect taxes. So, go to the Sea of Galilee and prepare your fishing tools. Pick up the first fish that you capture. Look in its mouth, and you will see a silver coin that is worth about twice the tax. Take the coin to the people who collect taxes to pay for my tax and your tax.”

18 1 Immediately after that, the apprentices came to Jesus. They asked him, “So then, who will be the most important people in God’s heavenly kingdom?”

2 Jesus told a young child to come to him. He had the young child stand among them.
3 Then he told them, “You need to change so that you are like young children. That is the only way to participate in God’s heavenly kingdom. What I have said is true. 4 So then, consider people who make themselves less important, so that they are as unimportant as this young child. It is those people who are the most important in God’s heavenly kingdom. 5 Further, when people, because they are my apprentices, welcome a young child such as this one here, it is the same as welcoming me.

6 On the other hand, suppose that an insignificant person who trusts me sinned because of certain people. God will punish those people so severely that they would prefer to have someone tie a heavy stone around their necks and drop them into the middle of the ocean. 7 How terrible it will be for people in this world because of the things that cause them to sin! Now those things have to exist. However, how terrible it will be for the people who cause those things to exist! 8 Suppose that you sinned because you touched something or went somewhere. You should never do that again, even if you have to chop off your hands or your feet to make sure of it! You should respond that drastically because it is better for you to truly live without hands or feet than to have both hands and feet but end up in hell. 9 Suppose that you sinned because you looked at something. You should never do that again, even if you have to remove your eyes to make sure of it! You should respond that drastically because it is better for you to truly live with only one eye than to have both eyes but end up in hell.

10 Do not consider even one insignificant person who trusts me to be unimportant. In fact, I want you to know that the angels that protect them are in heaven. They are continually with

God my Father, who rules from heaven. **11** [2] [I, the Son of Man, am here to rescue people who do not worship and obey God.] **12** Think about this situation: A man owns 100 sheep, but one of them wanders away. The man will most certainly leave the 99 other sheep on the side of a hill by themselves and search for the one sheep that wandered away! **13** Now suppose that he found the one sheep that wandered away. He would be much happier about this one sheep than about the 99 other sheep that did not wander away. What I have said is true! **14** God your Father, who rules from heaven, is like that man. He does not want even one insignificant person **who trusts me** to end up in hell.

15 Suppose that fellow believers sin against you. You should visit them and privately tell them what they did wrong. Suppose that they accept what you say. In that case, you have made things right with your fellow believers. **16** However, suppose that those fellow believers do not accept what you say. In that case, bring one or two other believers with you **when you visit them again to tell them what they did wrong**. That way, **you are doing what Moses wrote in the law, that** two or three people must confirm what someone says. **17** Suppose that those fellow believers reject what the people you brought with you say. In that case, tell the whole group of believers **about what happened**. Finally, suppose that those fellow believers reject what the group of believers says. In that case, treat those fellow believers as if they were **unbelieving** non-Jews or people who collect taxes. **Do not treat them as fellow believers any longer.** **18** When you confirm anything here on earth, God will confirm it in heaven. When you nullify anything here on earth, God will nullify it in heaven. What I have said is true! **19** Also, when at least two of you here on earth together request the same thing, God my Father, who rules from heaven, will do whatever it is that you request. What I have said is true! **20** **God will do that** because I am spiritually present whenever at least two or three of you come together as my apprentices."

21 After that, Peter came to Jesus and asked, "My Lord, how many times do I need to forgive fellow believers when they keep sinning against me? **Do I need to forgive them** as many as seven times?"

22 Jesus replied, "I tell you that you must forgive others 77 times **and more**, not just seven times. **23** Given what I have told you, here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a king wished to have his servants pay him what they owed him. **24** So, the king began to find out **what his servants owed him**. Someone led in a servant who owed the king an extremely large

sum of money. **25** However, the servant did not have enough money to pay what he owed. So, the king told his men, ‘Sell as slaves the servant, the servant’s wife, and the servant’s children. Also, sell anything that the servant owns. Then, give me the money that you received.’

26 After he heard that, the servant knelt down in front of the king. He begged him, ‘My lord, please wait patiently. I will eventually pay all the money that I owe.’

27 The king pitied his servant. So, he did not require the servant to pay what he owed, and he let him go. **28** When the servant left the king, he noticed another servant who owed him only 100 small coins. He grabbed that servant **around the throat** and began to squeeze it. He demanded, ‘Pay me the money that you owe!’

29 After he heard that, the other servant knelt down **before him**. He begged him, ‘Please wait patiently. I will eventually pay **the money that I owe**.’ **30** However, that servant did not want **to wait**. When he left that place, he had someone put the other servant in jail and keep him there until he paid the money that he owed.

31 When the rest of the servants learned what that servant had done, they became very sad. They went to the king and told him about everything that the servant had done. **32** After that, the king told that servant to come to him. The king told him, ‘You are an evil servant! Since you asked me **to wait patiently**, I did not require you to pay any of what you owed. **33** I helped you. So, you should have helped the other servant.’ **34** Then the king was angry. He had his men arrest and torture that servant until he paid all the money that he owed. **35** Whenever any of you do not completely forgive a fellow believer, God my Father, who rules from heaven, will do to you what **that king did to his servant**.”

19 **1** So, Jesus completed saying those things. Then, he **and his apprentices** left the region of Galilee. They traveled to the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan River. **2** Large groups of people went with him, and in that place, he cured those **who were sick**.

3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus in order to investigate him. They asked, “Does our law allow a husband to divorce his wife whenever he wants to?”

4 Jesus replied, “You have read **in the Law that God gave Moses** that when God first created
everything, he created people to be male and female. **5** Then God said, ‘That is why men**, when
they marry,** no longer live with their parents and instead live with their wives. Each husband
and wife together become like one person.’ **6** Consequently, each husband and wife are not like
two different people any longer. Rather, they are like one person. Since that is true, no one
should divide people whom God has united.”

7 The Pharisees responded, “If that is true, why **did Moses instruct us in our law about how
to divorce wives**? He required each husband to present his wife with a document that states that
he is divorcing her. Then, he can divorce her.”

8 Jesus answered, “Moses knew that you were unwilling to obey. That is why **in the Law** he
permitted you to divorce your wives. However, when God first created everything, that is not
what he intended. **9** Now here is what I want to tell you: a man may divorce his wife only if
she has had improper sex. When a man divorces his wife for any other reason and marries
another woman, he disobeys what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one’s
spouse. Further, any man who marries a woman whose husband has divorced her also disobeys
what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one’s spouse.”

10 Jesus’ apprentices responded, “If that is the only basis on which a husband can divorce
his wife, it is not beneficial to get married!”

11 Jesus replied, “Many people do not accept what you have said. Only people whom God
enables **to accept it can do so**. **12** Here is what I mean: Some men are impotent because they
were already like that when their mothers gave birth to them. Other men are impotent because
people castrated them. Other men are impotent because they chose to live that way in order to
serve in God’s heavenly kingdom. Anyone who can accept **what I am saying** should accept it.”

13 After that, some people took young children to Jesus. They wanted him to bless them by
touching them and to pray **for them**. However, the apprentices told them to stop. **14** However,
Jesus told **the apprentices**, “Allow the young children to come here. Do not stop them! **I say
that because** they and people like them are part of God’s heavenly kingdom.” **15** **After saying
that,** Jesus blessed the young children by touching them. Then, he left that place.

16 After that, a person came to Jesus! He asked, “Instructor, what is a good thing I can do so that I will live with God forever?”

17 Jesus replied, “You should not ask me about what would be a good **thing to do**. God is the only one who is good. Now **to answer your question**, since you desire to truly live, you should do what God has commanded.”

18 The man replied, “Which **things that God has commanded do you mean**?”

Jesus answered him, “Here are the ones I mean: Do not murder others. Do not be sexually unfaithful to your spouse. Do not steal things. Do not say what is untrue. **19** Treat your parents respectfully. Care for people you know as much as you care for yourself.”

20 The young man replied, “I have done each of these things **that God commanded**. What more do I need to do **to truly live**?”

21 Jesus answered, “Since you desire to complete **doing what is good**, go **home** and sell what you own. Give **that money** to poor people. **If you do that,** God will reward you in heaven. Then, come with me as my apprentice.” **22** After the young man listened to what Jesus said, he felt very sad and left. **He was very sad** because he was rich **and did not want to lose what he owned**.

23 After that, Jesus told his apprentices, “It is hard for rich people to participate in God’s heavenly kingdom. What I have said is true. **24** I want you to understand that, so I will repeat it. Large animals like camels cannot fit into very small spaces. However, it is even harder for rich people to participate in God’s kingdom.”

25 What Jesus said greatly surprised the apprentices. They said, “So then, it must be that God does not actually rescue anyone!”

26 Jesus looked directly at his apprentices. He said, “People cannot rescue themselves. However, God can do anything!”

27 After **Jesus said** that, Peter replied, “We left behind everything we had and went with you as your apprentices! So then, how will God reward us?”

28 Jesus replied, “Someday God will renew everything that he has made, and I, the Son of Man, will sit down **to rule** from my great throne. When that happens, you too, since you have come with me as my apprentices, will sit down **to rule** from 12 thrones**, one for each of you**. You will decide whether people from the 12 Israelite clans are guilty or innocent. What I have said is true. **29** Some people leave behind houses, siblings, parents, wives, children, or fields. They do that because they want to be my apprentices. God will give those people many times **what they left behind**. Further, he will enable them to live with him forever. **30** **At that time,** many people who are important right now will become unimportant. Many people who are unimportant right now will become important.

20 **1** In fact, here is what God’s heavenly kingdom is like: a man who managed a household left his house in the morning **to go to the town’s open area**. He wanted to hire people to take care of his grape vines. **2** He found some people who agreed to work that day for one coin. Then, he told them to take care of his grape vines. **3** At about nine o’clock in the morning, the man arrived in the town’s open area again. He noticed more people there who wanted to work. **4** He told them, ‘Join the other people who are taking care of my grape vines. I will pay you a fair wage.’ **5** They agreed to do so. At about noon and at about three o’clock in the afternoon, the man again arrived **in the town’s open area**. He said the same thing **to the people he found there, and they too agreed to take care of his grape vines**. **6** At about five o’clock in the afternoon, the man again arrived **in the town’s open area**. He noticed that there were still people there who wanted to work. He asked them, ‘Why have you been here waiting all day to work?’

7 They replied, ‘**We are waiting here** because nobody has hired us.’

Then the man said, ‘Join the other people who are taking care of my grape vines.’ **They agreed to do so.**

8 When it was evening, the man who managed the household spoke to the man who supervised the workers. He said, ‘Tell the people who worked today to come here. Starting with the people that I hired latest in the day and ending with the people that I hired earliest in the day, pay them what they earned.’ **9** Then the people who started working at about five o’clock in the afternoon came forward. The supervisor paid one coin to each of them. **10** Then

the people who started working first came forward. They expected that the supervisor would pay them more **than that**. However, he paid one coin to each of them also.

11 After these workers took their money, they complained about how the man who managed the household was behaving. **12** They said to him, 'These people who started working last worked for just one hour. However, you are treating them as if they worked as much as we have! We worked the most and during the hottest parts of the day.'

13 The man who managed the household spoke to one of the workers who was complaining, 'My friend, I am not treating you unfairly. You agreed **to take care of my grape vines** for one coin. **14** I want to pay those who started working last as much as I pay you **who started working first**. So, take what I have paid you and go **home**. **15** Our law allows me to do what I like with what I own. You should not be jealous because I am being generous!'
16 Similarly, people who are unimportant right now will become important. People who are important right now will become unimportant."

17 Sometime later, Jesus was walking toward the city of Jerusalem. He had his 12 apprentices come with him. No one else was with them. While they were walking, he told them, **18** "We are walking toward the city of Jerusalem! There, somebody will help the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law arrest me, the Son of Man. They will decide that I am guilty and that someone should kill me. **19** They will bring me to the non-Jewish authorities. Those people will make fun of me, beat me, and kill me by nailing me to a cross. Then, during the third day after I died, God will make me alive again."

20 After that, Zebedee's wife came to Jesus with her two sons, James and John. She knelt before Jesus and asked him to do something **for her**. **21** Jesus replied, "What do you want **me to do for you**?"

She said, "Please promise me that, when you rule, you will greatly honor my two sons by having one of them sit at your right side and the other one sit at your left side."

22 Then Jesus responded by speaking **to her two sons**, "You do not realize what you have actually requested. Are you willing to suffer as I will soon suffer?"

Her two sons, James and John, replied, "Yes, we are willing **to suffer**."

23 Then Jesus said to them, “You will certainly suffer as I will soon suffer. However, I am
not the one who chooses whom to honor by having them sit at my right side and at my left
side. Rather, God my Father has already chosen who **will sit in those places**.”

24 When the ten other apprentices learned **what James and John had requested**, they were
very upset with them. **25** So, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He said to them, “You
understand that the people who govern the non-Jews dominate them. Further, important people
among them control everyone else. **26** You must not behave like that. Rather, when one of you
wants to be important, that person must serve the others. **27** Likewise, when one of you wants
to be most important, that person must work for the others. **28** **You should be** like me, the Son
of Man. I am here to serve other people. I am not here so that other people will serve me.
Indeed, I am going to die in order to free many people **from their sins**.”

29 After that, Jesus and his apprentices left the city of Jericho**, which they had been visiting**.
A large group of people went with them. **30** Now two men who were blind were sitting down
next to the path! Someone told them, “Jesus is walking by.”

So, they were shouting, “Our Lord, you who are a descendant of King David, please help
us!”

31 Some people from the large group of people scolded them to keep them quiet. However,
the men who were blind yelled even louder, “Our Lord, you who are a descendant of King
David, please help us!”

32 Then, Jesus stopped walking. He spoke to the two men who were blind. He asked,
“How would you like me to help you?”

33 They replied, “Our Lord, we want to be able to see!” **34** Jesus pitied them. He touched
their eyes. As soon as he did that, they could see. Then, they went with Jesus as his
apprentices.

21 **1** After that, Jesus and his apprentices continued to walk toward the city of Jerusalem,
and they were getting closer. They were near the Mount of Olives, just outside the village of
Bethphage. Then, Jesus told two of his apprentices to go **ahead of them**. **2** He commanded

them, “Enter the village of Bethphage, which you see ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will see a female donkey that someone has tethered. Her colt will be next to her. Remove the tether from the female donkey and lead her and her colt to me here. 3 People might ask you about what you are doing. In that case, tell them, ‘The Lord needs this donkey and colt.’ As soon as you say that, those people will let you have the donkey and colt.” 4 When he said those things, what God said by speaking through one of the prophets came true:

5 “Say to the people who live in the city of Jerusalem,
‘Your king will soon be with you!
He is gentle. He sits on a donkey,
on a colt, which is a donkey’s offspring.’”

6 The two apprentices went to the village and did what Jesus had told them to do. 7 They led the donkey and her colt to Jesus. They spread their coats on the animals, and Jesus sat on the coats. 8 Then, to honor Jesus, a very large group of people laid their coats down on the path in front of Jesus. Other people cut small branches down from trees and laid them down on the path too. 9 Large groups of people walked in front of Jesus and behind him. They were shouting,

“Praise this descendant of King David!
May God bless him who is here to represent the Lord!
May everything in heaven praise him!”

10 How people welcomed Jesus when he went into the city of Jerusalem unsettled many people who lived there. They asked, “Who is this man?”

11 The large groups of people answered, “He is Jesus, from the town of Nazareth, which is in Galilee. He is a man who speaks for God.”

12 Later, Jesus visited the temple area. Some people were selling and buying things there. He forced them to leave. Other people were exchanging regular money for special temple money, and other people were selling small birds for people to sacrifice. Jesus flipped over their tables and chairs. 13 Then Jesus told those people, “The prophets wrote in the Scriptures, ‘People should say that my temple is a place where people pray.’ However, you have turned it into ‘a hideout for thieves’!”

14 Later, people who could not see and people who could not walk came to Jesus while he was in the temple area. Jesus cured them. **15** The ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law saw the amazing things that Jesus did. **They heard** young children in the temple area shouting, "Praise this descendant of King David!" **When they saw and heard those things**, they were very upset.

16 They asked him, "Do you realize what those young children are saying **about you**?"

Jesus replied, "Yes, **I realize it**! **What they are doing fits with what** you have read **in the Scriptures**:

> 'You have appointed young children and little babies
> to honor you.'"

17 Then Jesus **and his apprentices** went away from the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law. They left the city of Jerusalem and stayed overnight in the village of Bethany.

18 Early the next morning, when Jesus and his apprentices were going back to the city of Jerusalem, Jesus became hungry. **19** He noticed a fig tree near the path. So, he went over to it **to pick some figs to eat**. However, the tree only had leaves. Then Jesus spoke to the fig tree, "May you never again produce figs!" As soon as he said that, the fig tree died.

20 What the apprentices had just seen impressed them. They asked, "How did the fig tree die as soon as you spoke to it?"

21 Jesus replied, "Suppose that you trusted **God** and were not unsure **about what he can do**. Then, you could do what I did to the fig tree. Even more, you could tell the hill we are near to leave **this place** and fall into the ocean, and it would happen. What I have said is true.
22 Further, suppose that you trust God to do whatever you ask when you are praying. Then, he will do it for you."

23 Then Jesus visited the temple area, and he was instructing people there. The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders came to him. They asked, "In what way did someone authorize you to do what you have done? Who was it that authorized you **to do these things**?"

24 Jesus replied, “I too will ask you a question. When you answer it, I too will answer your question about the way in which someone authorized me to do what I have done. **25** Who authorized John the Baptizer to baptize people? Did God **authorize him** from heaven, or did people **authorize him**?”

Then the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders told each other, “Suppose that we answer that **God authorized John** from heaven. Then, he will tell us that we should have listened to John. **26** On the other hand, suppose that we answer that people **authorized John**. Then, since the large group of people believe that John spoke for God, we are afraid of how they would react.”

27 So, they answered Jesus, “We do not know **who authorized John**.”

Jesus responded, “Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you in what way someone authorized me to do what I have done. **28** Think about this situation: There was a man with two children. He went to the older one and told him, ‘My child, go **to where my grape vines are** and take care of them today.’

29 His child replied, ‘I will not **do that**!’ However, later he regretted **what he had said**. He took care of the grape vines after all.

30 After **speaking with the older child**, the man went to the younger child and told him to take care of his grape vines.

His child replied, ‘I will **do that**, my father!’ However, he did not take care of the grape vines.

31 Which of these two children did what their father wanted?”

The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders answered, “The older one.”

Jesus replied, “Prostitutes and people who collect taxes are participating in God’s kingdom before you are. What I have said is true. **32** **I say that** because, when John the Baptizer was with you, he did what was right. However, you did not trust him. In contrast, prostitutes and people who collect taxes did trust him. When you realized **that even they trusted John**, you did not regret how you were acting and trust him after all.

33 I will tell you another story. A man who managed a household planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it **in order to protect it**. He made a stone tank **to collect the grape juice that they would press out of the grapes**. He also built a tower **for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard**. He rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it, and he left to travel to a different country. **34** When it was almost time to harvest the grapes, the man told some of his servants to go to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. He wanted them to give him his share of the grapes **that the vineyard had produced**. **35** However, the people who were taking care of the vineyard grabbed the man's servants. They beat up some servants. They executed other servants. They **killed** other servants by throwing stones at them. **36** After that, the man told an even greater number of his servants to go **to the people who were taking care of the vineyard**. However, those people treated these servants just as they had treated the other servants. **37** Finally, the man told his own son to go to them. He thought that they would treat his son well **and give him his share of the grapes**.

38 However, when the people who were taking care of the vineyard saw the man's son arriving, they told each other, 'This man is the one who will inherit the vineyard. We should kill him, and then we can take the vineyard for ourselves.' **39** So, they grabbed the man's son and dragged him outside the vineyard. Then, they killed him. **40** After that, the man who owned the vineyard came back. How do you think he treated the people who were taking care of the vineyard?"

41 The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders replied, "He would kill those evil people! Then, he would rent the vineyard to other people who would give him his share of the grapes when it was time to harvest them."

42 Jesus responded, "**What I have said fits with what** you have read in the Scriptures:

> 'The people who were constructing a building refused to use a certain stone.
> However, that stone is now the most important one in the building.
> The Lord **God** did that,
> and we think it is amazing.'

43 So then, here is what I want to tell you: God will stop you from participating in his kingdom. He will have a different group of people participate in his kingdom. They will do

what he wants those in his kingdom to do. 44 Any people who trip over the stone that is now the most important one will injure themselves. Further, that stone will squash anyone on whom it drops."

45 The ruling priests and the Pharisees listened to the stories that Jesus told. They realized that Jesus was telling the stories about them. 46 They wanted to arrest Jesus. However, since the large groups of people believed that Jesus spoke for God, they were afraid of how those people would react. So, they did not arrest Jesus at that time.

22 1 Then Jesus used more stories to teach the chief priests and the Jewish leaders. He said, 2 "Here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a king prepared a banquet to celebrate his son, who was getting married. 3 When it was time for the banquet, the king told his servants to summon the people that he had asked to attend the banquet. However, those people refused to attend the banquet. 4 So, the king told different servants to summon again the people he had asked to attend the banquet. He instructed them to say that the meal was ready, that his servants had prepared special cows to eat and everything else, and that they should attend the banquet. 5 However, the people that the king had asked to attend the banquet ignored his servants. Instead, some of them left for other places, like their farms or workplaces. 6 Other people that the king had asked to attend the banquet grabbed his servants. They abused some of them, and they killed some of them. 7 So, the king was very upset. He told his soldiers to kill the people who killed his servants and to burn down their town. 8 After that, the king told his servants that, although the feast for his son's wedding was ready, the people he had asked to attend did not deserve to be there. 9 So, he told his servants to walk to the intersections of the main roads and to tell the people they encountered to attend the feast for his son's wedding. 10 So, his servants walked to the intersections of the roads. They brought all the people they encountered, whether those people did what was right or did what was wrong. Then, the wedding hall was full of people who were feasting. 11 The king went into the hall to see the people who were feasting. While he was there, he noticed that one person did not have on the proper clothing for a wedding. 12 The king called him friend and told him that he should not have attended without having on the proper clothing for a wedding. The person had nothing to say in response. 13 After that, the king told his servants to tie the person up and cast him out of the wedding hall. He told them to punish him in a dark place, where people will cry and sorrowfully

grind their teeth. **14** As that story illustrates, God summons many people to participate in his kingdom. However, he only chooses a few of them to do so."

15 After Jesus said those things, the Pharisees left that place. They started to plan how they could cause him to make a mistake in what he said. **16** So, the Pharisees told some of their apprentices and some people who supported King Herod to go to Jesus and say to him, "Our instructor, we realize that you say what is true. Further, you truthfully instruct people in what God wants them to do. You do not pay attention to how important or powerful people are. So, you do not care about what other people think. **17** So, please tell us how you answer this question: Does our law allow us to pay taxes to the Roman government, or does it not allow that?"

18 However, Jesus knew that they were trying to harm him. So, he replied, "You are trying to make me say something wrong. You pretend to respect me, but you really do not! **19** Hand me one of the coins that you use to pay taxes." Someone handed him a Roman coin.

20 Then Jesus asked, "Whose picture and name are on this coin?"

21 They replied, "It is Caesar's picture and name."

Then Jesus said, "In that case, give to the Roman government what belongs to it, and give to God what belongs to him." **22** What Jesus said impressed the Pharisees' apprentices and the people who supported King Herod. They left where he was.

23 Later that day, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They are a Jewish group that does not believe that God will make people who have died alive again. They asked Jesus, **24** "Our instructor, Moses wrote in the Scriptures about what should happen when a man with a wife but no children dies. When that happens, the man's brother should marry the dead man's wife. When they have a child, they should consider it to be the child of the dead man. **25** So, consider this situation: seven brothers lived here. One brother got married, but then he died before he had children. So, one of his brothers married his widow. **26** The same thing happened to the second brother, the third brother, and the other four brothers. They each married the widow but died before they had children. **27** Finally, the widow died. **28** So then, of

those seven brothers, whose wife will she be when God makes people alive again? We ask because she got married to all seven of them at different times."

29 Jesus replied, "You do not realize what the Scriptures mean or how powerful God is. So, you believe what is wrong. 30 Here is what I mean: after God makes people alive again, they will not get married. Instead, they will be like angels who dwell in heaven and do not get married. 31 Now I will speak about whether God makes people who have died alive again. You have read in the Scriptures that God said to you, 32 'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.' It is living people who worship God, not dead people. So, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who all have died, must be alive again!" 33 The things that Jesus taught impressed the large groups of people.

34 The Pharisees heard that Jesus answered so well that the Sadducees could not respond. So, the Pharisees met together and went to where Jesus was. 35 Then, one of the Pharisees, who was an expert in the Jewish law, decided to investigate Jesus. He asked him, 36 "Instructor, which of the laws that God gave us is the most important?"

37 Jesus replied: "We must love the Lord, the God whom we worship, with everything that we desire, everything that we do, and everything that we think. 38 That is the most important law. 39 The next most important law is similar. It is that we must care for people we know as much as we care for ourselves. 40 All the parts of the Scriptures depend upon these two laws."

41 While those Pharisees were still all together near Jesus, he asked them, 42 "I want you to answer a question about the Messiah. Who is his ancestor?"

They replied, "His ancestor is King David."

43 Jesus replied, "In that case, why did the Holy Spirit cause King David to write that the Messiah was his Lord? People do not describe their descendants as their lords. However, King David wrote 44 that the Lord God said to David's Lord,

> 'Rule with me
> while I defeat all of your enemies!'

45 So then, since King David wrote that the Messiah was his Lord, how is it possible for King David to be his ancestor?" 46 The people who were there could not answer his question. In fact, after that nobody was bold enough to ask him more questions.

23 1 After that, Jesus said to the large groups of people and to his apprentices, 2 "The Pharisees and the teachers of the Jewish law instruct you as Moses did. 3 So then, you should do whatever they tell you to do. However, they themselves do not do what they tell you to do. So, do not act as they do. 4 They tell people to do many things that are difficult. However, they do not do anything to help those people. 5 Whenever they do anything, they do it so that people praise them for it. For example, when they tie boxes containing Scripture on their foreheads and arms, they make sure the boxes are large. They make the hems on their robes very long. 6 They greatly enjoy sitting in the places for important people when they attend feasts or go to the Jewish meeting places. 7 They greatly enjoy it when people greet them respectfully in the open areas of towns and speak to them as important teachers. 8 However, you have only one teacher, me. Also, you are all fellow believers. So then, you should not allow people to speak to you as important teachers. 9 Further, you have one Father, the one who rules from heaven. So, you should not honor people here on earth by using the title 'my father' for them. 10 You have one instructor, I, who am the Messiah. So, you should not allow people to speak to you as their instructors. 11 The most important person in your group must serve the others. 12 God will cause people who think they are important to be unimportant. God will cause people who think they are unimportant to be important.

13 You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You keep people from participating in God's heavenly kingdom. In fact, you yourselves do not participate in the kingdom. Further, you prevent people who want to participate in it from doing so. How terrible it will be for you!

14 [You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You steal the property of women whose husbands have died. To make other people think that you are righteous, you pray for a long time. How terrible it will be for you! God will punish you very severely.]

15 You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You travel to many places to convert even one person to the Jewish religion. However, once you have done that, you cause that person to deserve to end up in hell as much as you do. How terrible it will be for you!

16 You do not know what you should be teaching. You say that when people have the temple guarantee what they promise, they do not need to do what they promised. However, you say that when they have the precious metal in the temple guarantee what they promise, they must do what they promised. How terrible it will be for you! **17** You do not understand what is true! You should realize that the precious metal **in the temple** is less important than the temple itself. It is the temple that makes the precious metal holy. **18** Similarly, **you say that** when people have the altar guarantee what they promise, they do not need to do what they promised. However, you say that when they have the sacrifice on the altar guarantee what they promise, they must do what they promised. **19** You do not understand what is true! You should realize that the sacrifice **on the altar** is less important than the altar itself. It is the altar that makes the sacrifice holy. **20** So, when people have the altar guarantee what they promise, they are having both it and every sacrifice on it guarantee what they promise. **21** Further, when people have the temple guarantee what they promise, they are having both it and God, who dwells there, guarantee what they promise. **22** When people have heaven guarantee what they promise, they are also having God's throne and God himself, who rules from that throne, guarantee what they promise.

23 You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You give one tenth of even your herbs and spices to God. However, you fail to obey the more important commands that God gave: to do what is right, to be merciful to others, and to be faithful to God. You should do these things as well as giving a tenth of everything to God. How terrible it will be for you! **24** You do not know what you should be teaching. You are like people who filter small flies out of their drinks without noticing large animals like camels in the same drinks!

25 You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! You seem to do what is right, just like dishes that you have washed on the outside. However, really you want what other people have and do not control yourselves, just like dishes that are still dirty on the inside. How terrible it will be for you! **26** You Pharisees do not

understand what is true! You should focus on doing what is right. Once you do that, you will also seem to do what is right, just like dishes that are clean on both the inside and the outside.

27 You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! I compare you to graves that people have painted white. They look good, but they are dirty and have many corpses in them. How terrible it will be for you! **28** Similarly, you seem to do what is right, but really you usually do what is wrong while pretending to do what is right.

29 You Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish law say that you obey God, but you really do not! How terrible it will be for you! You construct monuments to honor the people who spoke for God long ago. You decorate the graves of people who did what was right. **30** You declare that, had you been alive when your ancestors were, you would not have helped them murder the people who spoke for God. **31** When you declare that, you admit that you are descendants of and similar to the people who did murder those who spoke for God. **32** As for you, think about what will happen if you do what your ancestors did.

33 You are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! You will not avoid God punishing you in hell. **34** Since you are like that, I will have people who speak for God, people who are wise, and teachers of the Jewish law go to you! You will murder some of them and kill some of them by nailing them to crosses. You will beat some of them in your meeting places. You will chase them from one town to another. **35** So, God will consider you to be guilty for murdering everyone who did what was right here on earth but whom someone murdered. I am referring to **Adam's son** Abel, who did what was right, and Barachiah's son Zechariah, whom your ancestors murdered in the temple area, and everyone in between. **36** God will consider **you people who live in** this time period to be guilty of all those murders. What I have said is true.

37 Oh, people of Jerusalem! You killed the people who spoke for God long ago. Then you killed others whom God sent to you. You killed them by throwing stones at them. Many times I have wanted to bring you together **to protect you**, as a chicken brings her offspring together under her wings. However, you did not want me to do that. **38** Your city will become a place where no one lives! **39** In fact, here is what I want to tell you: the next time you see me, you will be saying, 'May God bless him who is here to represent the Lord!'"

24 **1** After that, Jesus left the temple area. As he was walking, his apprentices came to him and pointed out the impressive structures that were in the temple area. **2** He responded, “Look at all these structures! Enemies will completely destroy them. They will not leave anything standing. What I have said is true.”

3 Later, Jesus sat down on top of the Mount of Olives. His apprentices came to him. No one else was with them. They asked him, “Please explain to us when what you have described will happen. Also, **please explain to us** how we can tell when you are going to return **to this world** and when this current time period will end.”

4 Jesus replied, “Make sure that nobody deceives you! **5** **I say that** because many people will meet you and say that God has authorized them as he has authorized me. They will say that they are the Messiah. **By doing that,** they will deceive many people. **6** Whenever people tell you about wars that are happening and about wars that could happen, make sure that you are not afraid. Things like that have to happen. However, the current time period will not yet end. **7** Further, groups of people will attack each other. Many people will not have enough food to eat, and earthquakes will happen in many places. **8** Those events are like the first pains a pregnant woman feels when she is going to birth. They are bad, but many more bad things will still happen after them.

9 While those things are happening, people will hurt you and kill you. Indeed, because you are my apprentices, many groups of people will be hostile to you. **10** Also while those things are happening, many people will stop believing **in me**. They will have people arrest their fellow believers. They will be hostile to each other. **11** There will be many people who lie when they claim to speak for God. They will deceive many people. **12** Since more and more people will do what is wrong, many people will stop caring **for each other**. **13** However, if you persevere **in being my apprentices** while people harm you, God will rescue you. **14** You, my apprentices, will proclaim the good news about God’s kingdom throughout this world. That way, you will tell every group of people **about me**. After that, the current time period will end.

15 At some point, you will realize that the detestable thing that destroys is in the temple building. Daniel, who spoke for God, already referred to this detestable thing.” (So, anyone who has read what Daniel wrote should know what Jesus meant.) **16** “When you realize that,

those of you who are in the region of Judea should escape to the hilly areas nearby. **17** Those of you who are outside your homes should not go back into your homes to get anything.
18 Those of you who are working in fields should not go back home to get your coats.
19 When what I have described happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers! **20** Ask God to keep you from having to escape during the winter season or on the Jewish day of rest, **when it is difficult to travel**. **21** **I say that** because people will suffer very severely when what I have described happens. People have not suffered that severely since God created the world up to now, and no one will ever suffer that severely again.
22 Suppose that God were to allow what I have described to continue. In that case, nobody would survive. However, because of the people whom he has chosen **to belong to him**, God will not allow what I have described to continue.

23-24 While those things are happening, there will be people who lie when they claim to be the Messiah or to speak for God. They will perform amazing miracles. They will try to deceive the people whom God has chosen **to belong to him**, and they will almost succeed in doing so. Therefore, when people tell you that the Messiah is here or there, do not trust **what they say**.
25 I have warned you about this before it happens! **26** So, suppose someone says to you that the Messiah is in a place where no one lives. Do not go there. **Similarly, suppose that someone says to you that the Messiah** is in some private rooms. Do not trust what that person says.
27 Here is why I say that: lightning lights up the sky from one side to the other, **and everyone can see it**. Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return **to this world**, **everyone will see it**.
28 Carrion birds assemble wherever there is a dead body.

29 Once people suffer in the ways I have described, immediately God will cause the sun to become dark. The moon will not shine. Stars will drop down from the sky. God will disrupt the angels in heaven. **30** After that, people will see something in the sky that shows that I, the Son of Man, **am about to act**. In response, many groups of people here on earth will grieve. They will see me, the Son of Man, arriving by means of clouds. I will be powerful and very great.
31 I will **have an angel** sound a loud trumpet. I will tell my angels to collect the people whom I have chosen. They will collect them from every place that exists.

32 Listen to this story about how fig trees grow. Whenever they begin to produce new branches and leaves, you can tell that it is almost the summer season. **33** Similarly, whenever

you realize that what I have described is happening, you can tell that I will act very soon.
34 Most of the people who are alive right now will still be alive when what I have described
happens. What I have said is true. 35 Everything that God has created will eventually change
or disappear. However, what I have said will never change or disappear.

36 However, as for when this current time period will end, no human being knows that.
The angels who dwell in heaven do not know that. Even I, the Son, do not know that. In fact,
only God my Father knows that. 37 So, when I, the Son of Man, return to this world, it will be
like what happened when Noah was alive long ago. 38-39 Here is what I mean: at the time
before God flooded the whole world, people did not realize what was going to happen. They
did normal things, like eating, drinking, and getting married. They did those things right up to
the moment when Noah went into the big boat that he had built. Then, God flooded the whole
world and destroyed everyone who was not in the boat. That is what it will be like when I, the
Son of Man, return to this world. 40 Consider what will happen to two men working on a farm
when I return. God will bring one man to be with him. He will leave the other man behind to
punish him. 41 Consider what will happen to two women using a stone to prepare grain. God
will bring one woman to be with him. He will leave the other woman behind to punish her.

42 So then, you cannot know at what moment I, your Lord, will return to this world.
Because of that, you need to be ready at all times. 43 Now learn from this situation: Suppose
that a man who managed a household learned at what time a robber was going to steal from the
house. In that case, he would be ready for the robber. He would prevent him from stealing from
the house. 44 So then, since I, the Son of Man, will return to this world when you do not expect
me, you too need to be ready.

45 To further understand what I am saying, consider an important servant. His master has
put him in charge of all the other servants, and he needs to feed them at the proper times. He
should be trustworthy and act wisely. 46 When his master returns, it will be very good for that
servant if his master learns that he has done what he put him in charge to do. 47 The master
will put that servant in charge of everything that he owns. What I have said is true.
48 However, suppose that the servant were wicked. Then, he would think that his master was
staying away for a long time. 49 So, he would start hitting the other servants. He would feast
with drunk people. 50 However, then his master would return at a time when the servant does

not expect him. 51 The master will punish that servant severely. He will send him where he punishes people who pretend to obey but really do not. There, people will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.

25 1 Here is what God's heavenly kingdom will be like at that time: Ten young women each took an oil lamp and prepared to escort a bridegroom to his wedding celebration. 2 As for those young women, five of them were foolish, and the other five of them were wise. 3 Here is how five of them were foolish: they each took an oil lamp, but they did not take any extra oil for their lamps. 4 In contrast, here is how five of them were wise: they each took an oil lamp and also some extra oil for their lamps. 5 Now the bridegroom did not arrive for a long time. So, all the young women became drowsy and then fell asleep. 6 Later, sometime during the night, someone shouted, 'The bridegroom is almost here! You must escort him to his wedding celebration!' 7 When they heard that, all the young women woke up and prepared their oil lamps.

8 The foolish young women said to the wise young women, 'Our oil lamps no longer shine brightly. So, please share your oil with us.'

9 The wise young women replied, 'We will not share our oil, because there is not enough for all of us. You should find someone from whom to buy oil for yourselves.' 10 So, the foolish young women left to buy oil. While they were gone, the bridegroom arrived. The wise young women, who were ready to escort him, went with him to the wedding hall. Then, people closed its doors.

11 Later, the other young women also arrived at the wedding hall. They asked the bridegroom, 'Sir, please open the door so that we can come in!'

12 The bridegroom replied, 'I will not open the door, because I do not recognize you. What I have said is true!' 13 So then, you cannot know at what moment I will return to this world. Because of that, you need to be ready at all times.

14 Even further, here is what God's heavenly kingdom is like: a man decided to travel to a different country. So, he summoned his servants and put them in charge of what he owned.

15 He gave as much money to each servant as each one could manage. He gave five bags of money to one servant. He gave two bags of money to another servant. He gave one bag of money to another servant. As soon as he did that, he traveled to a different country. **16** Then, the servant who had five bags of money went to invest the money. He made five more bags of money. **17** Similarly, the servant who had two bags of money **invested the money**. He made two more bags of money. **18** However, the servant who had one bag of money went to bury it in the ground **to keep it safe**.

19 Much later, the servants' master returned. He wanted to know what they had done with the bags of money. **20** So, the servant who had five bags of money went to him. He brought **them and** the five more bags of money **that he had made**. He said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of money. I have made five more bags of money!'

21 His master replied, 'I approve of what you have done. You are a trustworthy servant who does what is right! You were trustworthy when I put you in charge of only some money. Now I will put you in charge of many important things. Enjoy what I have with me!'

22 Then, the servant who had two bags of money went to him too. He said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of money. I have made two more bags of money!'

23 His master replied, 'I approve of what you have done. You are a trustworthy servant who does what is right! You were trustworthy when I put you in charge of only some money. Now I will put you in charge of many important things. Enjoy what I have with me!'

24 Then, the servant who had one bag of money went to him too. He said, 'Master, I realized that you are a demanding person. You are like a farmer who harvests crops that he did not plant. **25** So, because I feared you, I went to bury your bag of money in the ground **to keep it safe**. Now I am giving you back your money!'

26 His master replied, 'You are an evil servant who refuses to work! You claim that you realized that I am like a farmer who harvests crops that he did not plant. **27** If that were true about me, you should have given the bag of money to people who lend money. Then, when I returned, I would have gotten it back plus the interest it earned.'

28 So **the master said to his other servants,** ‘Take the bag of money from him! Give it to the servant who has ten bags of money. **29** **I command that** because people give more to those who already have something. They will have many things. In contrast, people take everything from those who already have very little. **30** Now **to punish** this useless servant, cast him out into a dark place, where people will cry and sorrowfully grind their teeth.’

31 When I, the Son of Man, return **to this world** with all the angels, I will be very glorious. At that time, I will sit down **to rule** from my great throne. **32** Then all groups of people will assemble in front of me. I will divide them into two groups, as a sheepherder divides his animals into a group of sheep and a group of goats. **33** I will have some people, who are like sheep, go to the area to my right **to honor them**. I will have the other people, who are like goats, go to the area to my left **to shame them**. **34** After that, I, the king, will tell the people in the area to my right, ‘You are people whom God my Father has blessed. Come with me! God will enable you to participate in the kingdom that he set up for you when he created everything. **35** **You will do that** because you fed me when I was hungry. You gave me water when I was thirsty. You welcomed me when I arrived from a different place. **36** You gave me clothes when I did not have enough to wear. You took care of me when I was ill. You visited me when I was in jail.’

37 After that, the people who did what was right will reply, ‘Lord, we do not remember feeding you when you were hungry. **We do not remember** giving you water when you were thirsty. **38** We do not remember welcoming you even though you were from a different place. **We do not remember** giving you clothes when you did not have enough to wear. **39** We do not remember visiting you when you were ill or in jail.’

40 I, the king, will respond, ‘Whenever you do something to help an insignificant fellow believer, it is as if you did it to help me. What I have said is true.’

41 After that, I will tell the people in the area to my left, ‘You are people whom God has cursed. Leave me! **I send you** to hell, which God set up for Satan and his demons. **42** **You will go there** because you did not feed me when I was hungry. You did not give me water when I was thirsty. **43** You did not welcome me when I arrived from a different place. You did not

give me clothes when I did not have enough to wear. You did not take care of me when I was ill and in jail.'

44 After that, those people will reply, 'Lord, we do not remember failing to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or came from a different place or did not have enough to wear or were ill or in jail.'

45 He will reply, 'I tell you truly that you did not do for me whatever you did not do for even the least important one among these people of mine.'

46 As for those people **who did what was wrong**, God will punish them forever. In contrast, the people who did what was right will live with God forever."

26 **1** So, Jesus completed saying all those things. Then, he told his apprentices, **2** "As you know, two days from now, the Passover festival will begin. At that time, somebody will help the authorities arrest me, the Son of Man. They will have people kill me by nailing me to a cross."

3 At that time, the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders assembled outside the house of the ruling priest whose name was Caiaphas. **4** They started to plan a clever way to arrest Jesus and have others execute him. **5** However, they agreed that they would not act during the Passover festival. Otherwise, the people who were there in Jerusalem might riot.

6 One time, Jesus **and his apprentices** were in the village of Bethany. They were in the home of Simon, who used to have a skin disease. **7** While Jesus was feasting **there**, a woman came to him. She brought with her a stone jar that contained a valuable, fragrant ointment. She poured the ointment on Jesus' head. **8** When the apprentices noticed **what the woman had done**, they were very upset. They declared, "She wasted **the valuable ointment**! **9** She could have sold it for a lot of money! Then, she could have given **that money** to poor people."

10 However, Jesus realized **what they were saying**. He told them, "Do not bother this woman! **I say that** because what she did to me was right. **11** There will always be poor people with you. **So, you can help them whenever you want to**. However, I will not always be with you. **12** When she poured this ointment on me, she was getting me ready for when someone buries

me. **13** In every place where my apprentices proclaim the good news, they will also tell what this woman just did. That way, people remember her. What I have said is true."

14 After that, one of Jesus' 12 representatives visited the ruling priests. This man's name was Judas Iscariot. **15** He said to them, "Suppose that I help you arrest Jesus. How much money would you pay me?" **In response,** they offered Judas 30 silver coins. **16** From that moment on, Judas tried to find a good time to help **the ruling priests** arrest Jesus.

17 During the first day of the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, the apprentices came to Jesus. They asked him, "Where should we set up the meal for the Passover celebration?"

18 Jesus told them, "Enter the city of Jerusalem and find a certain man. Tell him, 'Our instructor says that something important is about to happen to him. He wants to eat the meal for the Passover celebration with us, his apprentices, in your home.'" **19** The apprentices did what Jesus told them to do. They **went to that man's house and** set up the meal for the Passover celebration.

20 When it was evening, Jesus and his 12 representatives began to feast. **21** As they ate, Jesus told them, "One of you is going to help **my enemies** arrest me. What I have said is true."

22 The apprentices became very sad. Every one of them told Jesus, "Lord, I will not do that!"

23 Jesus replied, "The one who will help **my enemies** arrest me is eating food here with me. **24** I, the Son of Man, will die. That is what you can read in the Scriptures about me. Nevertheless, how terrible it will be for the man who helps **my enemies** arrest me, the Son of Man. In fact, that man would be better off if he had never existed."

25 Judas, the one who was going to help **his enemies** arrest him, replied, "Teacher, I will not do that!"

Jesus replied, "Yes you will."

26 As they ate, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread. He thanked God **for the loaf of bread**. Then, he tore it into pieces and handed the pieces to the apprentices **to eat**. He said, "This **bread** is my

body. Receive it and eat it.” **27** Then Jesus picked up a cup **of wine**. He thanked God **for the wine**. Then, he handed **the cup of wine** to the apprentices. He said, “All of you must drink wine from this cup. **28** This wine is my blood, which inaugurates the agreement **God is making with you**. My blood will flow from my body **when my enemies kill me**. That way, God will forgive the sins of many people. **29** Here is what I want to tell you: From this moment on, I will not drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again with you when we participate in God my Father’s kingdom.”

30 After they sang a song praising God, Jesus and his apprentices walked to the Mount of Olives.

31 After that, Jesus told them, “**God had Zechariah** write in the Scriptures,

> ‘I will kill the one who is like a shepherd.
> Then, the people who are like sheep in his flock will flee.’

So, tonight all of you will reject me! **32** However, once God has made me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the region of Galilee **and meet you there**.”

33 Peter replied, “Suppose that everyone else rejects you. Despite that, I will never reject you!”

34 Jesus replied, “Tonight before male chickens crow **at dawn**, you will say three times that you are not my apprentice! What I have said is true.”

35 Peter told him, “I will always say that I am your apprentice, even if I die with you because of that!” The rest of the apprentices said the same thing.

36 After that, Jesus and his apprentices walked to a place whose name was Gethsemane. He told the apprentices, “Stay here. I will walk over there and pray **to God**.” **37** Jesus had Peter and Zebedee’s two sons**, James and John**, go with him. Then, Jesus started to become very sad and upset. **38** He told those three apprentices, “I am so sad that I feel like I am dying. Stay here and stay awake with me!” **39** After saying that, Jesus walked a little further. Then, he kneeled down to pray. He said, “God my Father, if there is any way to do so, please prevent me from suffering terribly. However, please do what you want to do, not what I want you to do.”

40 Then he returned to the three apprentices. He discovered that they were asleep. He woke them up and rebuked Peter, “It disappoints me that you men could not stay awake with me for just a short time! 41 You want to do what I say, but you are not strong enough. Stay awake and pray! That way, nothing can convince you to sin.” 42 Then Jesus walked a short distance away a second time. He prayed, “God my Father, there may be no way to prevent me from suffering terribly. So, please do what you want to do!”

43 Then he returned a second time to the three apprentices. He discovered that they, because they were so sleepy, had fallen asleep again. 44 So, Jesus walked a short distance away a third time. He prayed again what he had prayed before. 45 Then he returned to the three apprentices. He woke them up and rebuked them, “It disappoints me that you continue to sleep! The time when I will suffer is about to begin! Someone is about to help sinful people arrest me, the Son of Man. 46 Stand up! We are going to leave this place. The person who is helping my enemies arrest me has arrived!”

47 While Jesus was still talking to the three apprentices, Judas arrived. He was one of the 12 men whom Jesus had chosen to represent him. He brought with him a large group of people carrying swords and clubs. The ruling priests and the Jewish leaders had sent them to arrest Jesus. 48 Previously, Judas, who was helping Jesus’ enemies arrest him, told the group of people how they would know which man was Jesus. He instructed them, “The man you should arrest is the one whom I will greet affectionately.”

49 As soon as he arrived, Judas went to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Teacher!” Then he greeted Jesus affectionately.

50 Jesus told him, “My friend, I know why you are really here.”

After that, the large group of people arrested Jesus. 51 Then one of the men who were with Jesus pulled his sword out of its sheath! He attacked a man who served the ruling priest, but he only cut off that man’s ear. 52 After that, Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its sheath! I say that because someone will kill with a sword every person who tries to kill another person with a sword. 53 You should realize that I could ask God my Father to protect me, and he would immediately send more than 12 armies of angels to do so! 54 However, if I did that, then

what people wrote in the Scriptures would not come true. They wrote that what is happening to me has to occur."

55 At that time, Jesus told the groups of people **who were arresting him**, "You did not need to treat me like a dangerous bandit by arming yourselves with swords and clubs to arrest me. Each day I was peacefully instructing people in the temple area. You did not arrest me then! **56** However, as all these things have happened, what the prophets wrote has come true." After that, all of Jesus' apprentices deserted him and ran away.

57 The people who had arrested Jesus took him to **the house where** Caiaphas, the ruling priest**, lived**. The teachers of the Jewish law and the Jewish leaders had **already** assembled there. **58** Peter followed Jesus, but he stayed a safe distance away. He went into the area just outside **the house where** the ruling priest **lived**. He sat there with the servants. That way, he could see what was going to happen.

59 The ruling priests and all **the rest of** the Jewish council tried to find **people who would say** what was untrue about Jesus. That way, they could have **the Roman authorities** execute him. **60** However, even though many people said what was untrue about Jesus, the Jewish council did not find **anything that they could tell the Roman authorities about**. Finally, two people came forward. **61** They said, "This man said that he could tear down God's temple and construct it again within three days."

62 Then the ruling priest stood up. He asked Jesus, "Are you going to reply? How do you respond to what these people have said about you?" **63** Despite that, Jesus kept quiet. Then the ruling priest told him, "I want you to have the only real God guarantee that you will say truthfully whether you are the Messiah, God's Son."

64 Jesus replied, "What you have called me is right. In fact, here is what I want to tell you: From this time on, you will see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully with God. **You will see me** arriving by means of clouds."

65 When he heard that, the ruling priest was so upset that he ripped his outer garments. He said, "This man has insulted God! We certainly do not need anyone else to say anything about him. You all just heard him insult God! **66** What should we decide to do?"

The Jewish council replied, “Someone should execute him because of what he has said!”

67 After that, some of the people there spit in Jesus’ face **to insult him**. They struck him **with their fists**. They slapped him **68** and demanded, “**You who claim to be the** Messiah, prove to us that you speak for God! Name the people who just struck you!”

69 Meanwhile, Peter was sitting down in the area just outside the **ruling priest’s** house. A female servant came up to him and said, “**I can tell that** you were an apprentice of Jesus, that man from the region of Galilee.”

70 However, while everyone there was listening, he told them that he was not Jesus’ apprentice. He said, “I do not understand what you are talking about!”

71 Then Peter walked to the entrance **into the area just outside the house**. Another female servant noticed him there. She told the people who were standing nearby, “This man was an apprentice of Jesus, that man from the town of Nazareth.”

72 Peter again said that he was not Jesus’ apprentice. He solemnly promised, “I have never met that man!”

73 A little later, some people who were there came up to Peter. They told him, “When you talk, you sound like **you are from where Jesus is from**. So, you must really be one of his apprentices.”

74 After they said that, Peter asked God to punish him if he was lying. Then he solemnly promised, “I have never met that man!” As soon as he said that, a male chicken crowed.

75 Then Peter remembered what Jesus had told him. He had said, “Before male chickens crow **at dawn**, you will say three times that you are not my apprentice.” Peter left **the area just outside the ruling priest’s house** and cried very sorrowfully.

27 **1** When it was morning, all the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders planned how they could have someone execute Jesus. **2** They had their guards tie Jesus up and take him from there to Pilate, the **Roman** local ruler. They wanted Pilate to condemn him.

3 After that, Judas, the man who had helped Jesus' enemies arrest him, realized that the ruling priests and Jewish leaders had decided that Jesus was guilty. He regretted what he had done. So, he gave the 30 silver coins that they had paid him back to them. 4 He told them, "I have done what is wrong by helping you arrest someone who is not guilty."

They replied, "We do not care what you think! That is your problem."

5 So Judas took the silver coins that they had paid him and threw them into the temple. Then he left the temple area. After that, he hanged himself and died.

6 Later, the ruling priests picked up the silver coins that Judas had thrown. They declared, "This is money that we paid so that a man would die. So, our laws prohibit us from adding these coins to the money for the temple."

7 After planning what to do, they used the coins to buy some land that people called the Potter's Field. That way, they could bury on that land people who came from a different place but who died in Jerusalem. 8 That is why people now call that land Blood's Field. 9 At that time, what God said by speaking through the prophet Jeremiah came true:

"They took the 30 silver coins, which was what some of the Israelites had decided that he was worth. 10 Then, the Israelites did what the Lord God had commanded me to do. They used those coins to buy the Potter's Field."

11 As for Jesus, the Jewish council had him stand in front of Pilate, the Roman local ruler. Pilate asked him, "Do you claim to be king over the Jewish people?"

Jesus replied, "What you are calling me is right."

12 Then the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders claimed that Jesus had done many bad things. However, Jesus did not respond. 13 After that, Pilate asked him, "Are you going to respond to anything that they have accused you of doing?" 14 However, Jesus did not respond to even one of the things that they accused him of doing. How Jesus was acting greatly impressed Pilate, the Roman local ruler.

15 It is important to know that whenever the Passover festival began, the Roman local ruler, Pilate, usually set free one person who was in jail. He allowed the group of people who

were in Jerusalem to decide who it would be. **16** It is also important to know that a famous man whose name was Barabbas was in jail. **17** So, when the people who were in Jerusalem assembled, Pilate told them, "I will set free one person who is in jail. Whom do you want it to be? Do you want it to be Barabbas? Or do you want it to be Jesus, whom people call the Messiah?" **18** Pilate asked that question because he realized that the Jewish council had arrested Jesus and brought him to Pilate because they were jealous of Jesus.

19 While Pilate was sitting where he did when he was deciding whether people were guilty or innocent, his wife sent a message to him: "Today I dreamed about that man, and it upset me very much. So, do not do anything with that man. He is a man who does what is right!"

20 However, the ruling priests and the Jewish leaders convinced the groups of people who were there to ask Pilate to set Barabbas free. Also, they convinced the groups of people to have Pilate execute Jesus. **21** Then the Roman local ruler, Pilate, told the groups of people who were there, "Choose one of these two men, and I will set that man free."

They replied, "We want you to set Barabbas free!"

22 Pilate replied, "So what do you want me to do with Jesus, whom people call the Messiah?"

All the people who were there replied, "Have your soldiers kill him by nailing him to a cross!"

23 Pilate replied, "But he has not done anything wrong!"

But they shouted even louder, "Have your soldiers kill him by nailing him to a cross!"

24 Then Pilate realized that he was not accomplishing anything by asking those questions. Rather, the group of people who were there were starting to riot. So, while they were watching, he washed his hands in water to indicate that he was not guilty. He declared, "I am not guilty of killing this man! That is your problem."

25 All the people who were there replied, "We and our children will be responsible for killing this man!" **26** Then Pilate set Barabbas free. He had his soldiers whip Jesus and take him away to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

27 After that, the soldiers who served the **Roman** local ruler**, Pilate,** took Jesus into their headquarters. They assembled all the soldiers who were there. **28** They pulled off his clothes and put a red robe on him**, the kind that kings wear**. **29** They took some branches with thorns and laced them together to make a crown. They put it on Jesus' head and had him hold a staff. Then they bowed down in front of him and made fun of him. They said, "Greetings, you who are king over the Jewish people!" **30** Then, they spat on Jesus **to insult him**. Also, they took the staff **from him** and kept hitting his head **with it**. **31** After the soldiers made fun of Jesus, they pulled the robe off of him. They put his own clothes back on him. Then, they took him **from there to the place where** they were going to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

32 As they were on their way, they passed a man who was from the city of Cyrene. His name was Simon. The soldiers forced this man to carry the cross for Jesus. **33** Then, they arrived at a place whose name is Golgotha. That name means "Skull Place." **34** The soldiers offered Jesus a drink that they had made out of wine and a bitter liquid. After he took a sip of it, Jesus refused to drink it. **35** After nailing Jesus to the cross, the soldiers split up his clothes among them by gambling for them. **36** Then, the soldiers stayed there to make sure that Jesus died. **37** They wrote on a sign why **they were executing Jesus**. On the sign were these words: "This man is Jesus. He was king over the Jewish people." The soldiers placed the sign above Jesus' head.

38 After that, the soldiers nailed two bandits to crosses near Jesus. They put one bandit on one side of Jesus. They put the other bandit on the other side of Jesus. **39** The people who walked past Jesus insulted him by shaking their heads **at him**. **40** They said **to him**, "You said that you could tear down God's temple and construct it again within three days. So, rescue yourself! Show us that you really are God's Son. Get down from that cross!"

41 Similarly, the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the **Jewish** leaders made fun of Jesus. They declared, **42** "He has rescued other people. However, he cannot rescue himself! He **says that he** is king over the people of Israel. So, he should get down now from that cross. Then we will trust him! **43** He says that he is God's Son and that he relies on God. However, if God really wanted to do so, he would protect him right now." **44** The two bandits whom the soldiers had nailed to crosses near Jesus also insulted him in similar ways.

45 At noon, it became dark in that whole area. **It stayed dark** until three o'clock in the afternoon. **46** At about three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus shouted, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?"

47 Some people who were there heard **what Jesus said and misunderstood it**. They said, "He is speaking to the prophet Elijah!" **48** As soon as they said that, one person quickly went to get a sponge. He soaked it in sour wine and attached it to the top of a staff. Then, he held it up to Jesus so that Jesus could suck **the sour wine** from it.

49 Then the other people there said, "Do not do anything else for him! We should wait to find out whether Elijah appears to rescue him." **50** After that, Jesus shouted loudly again. Then, he died. **51** Then the drape hanging **in front of the Most Holy Place** in the temple ripped in half. It tore from the top down to the bottom. Also, the earth quaked, and rocks broke apart. **52** Also, graves opened, and God made many of his people who had died alive again. **53** After God made Jesus alive again, those people left their graves. They went into **Jerusalem,** the sacred city. Many people saw them there.

54 The Roman officer and his soldiers, who were making sure that Jesus died, saw the earth quaking and the other things that happened. They became extremely afraid. They declared, "This man really was God's Son."

55 **While all that was happening,** many women were there. They had come with Jesus from the region of Galilee. They were the ones who had taken care of him. These women observed **what was happening** from farther away. **56** These women included Mary from the town of Magdala, another Mary who was the mother of James and Joseph, and Zebedee's wife.

57 When it was evening, a wealthy man arrived. His name was Joseph, and he was from the city of Arimathea. He too was one of Jesus' apprentices. **58** Joseph went to Pilate. He asked Pilate to allow him to take the body of Jesus **to bury it**. So, Pilate told **his soldiers** to give **him the body**. **59** So Joseph received Jesus' body. He **prepared to bury it by** winding a fresh sheet of cloth around it. **60** Then, Joseph put Jesus' body into Joseph's own fresh grave. Joseph's workers had made it by digging into a rock cliff. After that, Joseph rolled a huge flat stone to block the entrance to the grave. Then he left. **61** **While Joseph was doing those things**, Mary

from the town of Magdala and the other woman whose name was Mary were there in front of the grave.

62 The next day was the Jewish day of rest, the day after Preparation Day. On that day, the ruling priests and the Pharisees assembled to meet with Pilate. 63 They said, "Sir, we can recall something that Jesus, that man who deceived others, said while he was still alive. He claimed that during the third day after he died, God would make him alive again. 64 So, please tell your soldiers to protect Jesus' grave for the next three days. That way, his apprentices cannot go there, remove his corpse, and tell people that God had made him alive again. If they succeed in deceiving people in this way, it will be more dangerous than how Jesus himself deceived people."

65 Pilate told them, "Take with you some soldiers. Walk to the grave and protect it as well as you can." 66 So, they went to Jesus' grave and protected it. They marked the huge flat stone that blocked the entrance. That way, they would know if anyone moved it. Also, they left some soldiers there to make sure that no one opened the grave.

28 1 When the Sabbath ended, at dawn on Sunday morning, Mary from the town of Magdala and the other woman whose name was Mary went to observe Jesus' tomb. 2 Then the earth quaked violently! That happened because an angel from the Lord descended from heaven. He went to Jesus' grave. He rolled the flat stone away from the entrance to the grave. Then, he sat down on the stone. 3 This angel looked as bright as lightning. His garments were pure white. 4 The soldiers who were protecting the grave trembled because they were afraid of the angel. They were so afraid that they looked like they had died.

5 The angel told the two women, "I realize that you are looking for Jesus, whom people killed by nailing him to a cross. So, you should stop being afraid! 6 God made him alive again, which is what he told you would happen. So, he is no longer in this place! If you walk with us, we will show you where his body was. 7 Then, hurry to his apprentices and tell them that God has made Jesus alive again. Tell them that they should listen, and that Jesus is going ahead of them to the region of Galilee. Tell them that Jesus will meet them there. I have told you what to say!"

8 So the two women hurried away from the grave. They were afraid and also very happy. They ran **to where Jesus' apprentices were** to tell them **what had happened and what the angel had said**. **9** **As they were running,** Jesus came up to them! He said, "Greetings!" The two women went to him and **bowed down to** hold his feet **to honor him**. Also, they worshiped him. **10** After that, Jesus told them, "You should stop being afraid! Go to my apprentices and tell them to leave for the region of Galilee. I will meet them there."

11 Then, the two women went to meet **Jesus' apprentices**. Meanwhile, some of the soldiers **whom the Jewish leaders had told to make sure that no one opened Jesus' grave** entered the city of Jerusalem. They told the ruling priests about everything that had happened **at Jesus' grave**. **12** So, the ruling priests and the **Jewish** leaders assembled and planned what to do. They paid those soldiers a large number of silver coins **to bribe them**. **13** They instructed them, "Tell people that his apprentices arrived during the night while you were asleep and stole his body. **14** Suppose that the **Roman** local ruler**, Pilate,** learns what you are telling people. In that case, we will convince **him to refrain from punishing you**. You will not have to worry about anything." **15** So, the soldiers accepted the silver coins. They told people what **the ruling priests and Jewish leaders** had instructed them **to say**. In fact, even now Jewish people continue to repeat the story that the soldiers told.

16 Meanwhile, Jesus' 11 apprentices traveled to the region of Galilee. They went to the hill to which Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they met him **there**, they worshiped him. However, they were unsure **that it really was Jesus**. **18** Then Jesus came up to them and said, "God my Father has authorized me **to rule** over everything that God has created. **19** So then, go **from here**. Help all groups of people become my apprentices. Baptize them so that they belong to **God** the Father, me his Son, and the Holy Spirit. **20** Instruct them so that they do everything that I have told you **to do**. Finally, I will be with you at all times, even up to the point when this current time period ends."

Mark

1 **1** I am going to tell you the good news about Jesus, the Messiah. He is the Son of God.

2 This story began as Isaiah, who spoke for God, wrote that it would:

> "Listen, I am sending my messenger ahead of you.
> He will make things ready for when you come.
> **3** In the desolate place, someone will be calling out **to the people**:
> 'Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!
> Make yourselves ready for when he comes!'"

4 Now there was a man whose name was John. He baptized people in a desolate area. He proclaimed that people should allow him to baptize them. That would show that they were going to stop doing what was wrong. That way, God would forgive their sins. **5** Many people who lived in the region of Judea and many people who lived in the city of Jerusalem often went to listen to John. Many of these people agreed that they had sinned. Then, John baptized them in the Jordan River. **6** John wore rough clothes that he made out of camel's hair. He fastened around his waist a belt that he made from animal skin. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that desolate area. **7** He often preached, "Soon you will see someone else who is greater than I am. It is not appropriate for me even to kneel down and help him take off his sandals. **8** I use water to baptize you. However, he will give you the Holy Spirit, which will be like baptizing you."

9 Now while John was preaching and baptizing people, Jesus traveled from the town of Nazareth, which was in the region of Galilee. **He arrived where John was** and had John baptize him in the Jordan River. **10** As soon as John baptized him, Jesus waded out of the Jordan River. Then, he saw God opening the way from heaven. He saw that the Holy Spirit, who looked like a small bird, was descending **from heaven** to him. **11** Then God spoke from heaven, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. What you do pleases me." **12** As soon as that happened, the Holy Spirit sent Jesus into a desolate area. **13** Jesus stayed for 40 days in that

desolate area with the animals that lived there. During that time, Satan tried to make Jesus sin. Also, angels took care of Jesus.

14 Later, after **King Herod Antipas** arrested John, Jesus traveled **back** to the region of Galilee. There, he preached the good news from God. **15** He declared, “This is the moment when God is about to establish his kingdom here. Stop doing what is wrong! Trust the good news!”

16 One day, Jesus was walking next to the Sea of Galilee. He saw **a man whose name was** Simon and that man’s **younger** brother, **whose name was** Andrew. They earned money by catching and selling fish. **When Jesus saw them,** they were using nets to try to catch fish. **17** Jesus told them, “Come with me and be my apprentices. I will teach you how to gather people **to be my apprentices**, just as you have been gathering fish.” **18** As soon as **Jesus said that**, they stopped working. They went with him and were his apprentices.

19 Then Jesus walked a short distance **next to the sea**. He saw **a man whose name was** James and that man’s **younger** brother, **whose name was** John. They were sons of **a man whose name was** Zebedee. **When Jesus saw them,** they were preparing their fishing tools in a boat. **20** As soon as he saw them, Jesus commanded them, **“Come with me and be my apprentices.”** They got out of the boat and left Zebedee their father with the workers they had hired. They went with Jesus and were his apprentices.

21 Jesus, along with Peter, Andrew, James, and John, went to the town of Capernaum. As soon as it was the Jewish day of rest, Jesus visited the Jewish meeting place and instructed **the people who were there**. **22** The way that Jesus taught impressed **the people who were there**. **It impressed them** because Jesus did not teach as the teachers of the Jewish law did. Rather, he taught them like someone whom God had authorized to do so. **23** As Jesus was instructing people in the Jewish meeting place, a man whom a demon controlled was there. He shouted, **24** “Jesus from the town of Nazareth, leave us alone! You must be here to punish us. I realize who you are. You are the special one whom God has set apart!”

25 Then Jesus commanded the demon to stop **controlling the man**. He said, “Be quiet. Leave that man!” **26** The demon shook the man violently and shouted loudly. Then, it left the man.

27 What Jesus had done impressed all the people who were in the Jewish meeting place, and
they talked about it with each other. They said, "What he does is amazing! He teaches new
things as someone whom God has authorized to do so. He tells the demons what to do, and they
do what he says!" 28 And so, throughout the whole region of Galilee, people kept talking
about what Jesus had done.

29 As soon as Jesus forced the demon out of the man, he left the Jewish meeting place. He,
along with Simon, Andrew, James, and John, went to Simon and Andrew's home.
30 Meanwhile, Simon's mother-in-law was resting in bed because she had a fever. As soon as
Jesus arrived, the people there told him that she was sick. 31 So, Jesus went to her. He took her
hand and helped her stand up. Then, she recovered from the fever and offered Jesus and his
disciples some food.

32 When it was late in the evening, people brought to Jesus many men and women who
were sick or whom demons controlled. 33 In fact, almost everybody in the town of Capernaum
assembled outside the door of Simon and Andrew's home. 34 Jesus cured many people who
were sick in many different ways. He also forced demons out of many people. Further, because
the demons realized that Jesus was the Messiah, he did not allow them to say anything.

35 Jesus woke up early the next morning, before sunrise. He left the house and walked to a
place where no one lived. He prayed to God there. 36 When they realized that Jesus was gone,
Simon and other people with him urgently searched for Jesus. 37 When they found Jesus, they
told him, "Almost everybody in the town of Capernaum is trying to find you. We think that you
should return there with us."

38 Jesus replied, "I will not return with you. I need to do what I am here to do. So, we need
to visit other towns in this area. That way, I can preach the good news in those places too."
39 So Jesus and his apprentices visited all the towns in the region of Galilee. Jesus preached
the good news in the Jewish meeting places. Also, he forced demons out of people.

40 One day, a man who had a skin disease approached Jesus. He bowed down before Jesus
and urged him, "Please heal me! I know that you can heal me if you want to do so."

41 Jesus pitied the man. So, he stretched out his hand and touched the man. Jesus told him,
"I want to heal you, and I heal you now!" 42 At that time, Jesus cured the man. He no longer
had the skin disease!

43 As soon as he healed the man, Jesus commanded him to leave. As he was leaving, Jesus
sternly told him, 44 "Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go and show yourself to a
priest so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have the skin disease. Also, present
what Moses required you to offer to become ceremonially clean again. This will prove to the
community that you no longer have the skin disease." 45 However, after the man left, he
frequently told people about how Jesus had healed him. As a result, people from many
different places kept approaching Jesus. So, Jesus could no longer walk into any town publicly.
Instead, he stayed outside the towns in places where no one lived.

2 1 Sometime later, Jesus returned to the town of Capernaum. Then, people learned that he
was in a certain house. 2 So, very many people assembled there. There were so many of them
that there was no room for them inside the house or even outside the door. Jesus preached the
good news to them. 3 Then some people arrived at the house where Jesus was. Four of them
were carrying a man who could not move. 4 However, because of how many people were
there, they could not carry the man close to Jesus. So, they went up on the flat roof of the
house and dug a hole through it. Then, they lowered the man down as he was lying on his
sleeping pad. 5 Jesus perceived that these people believed that he could heal the man. So, he
said to the man who could not move, "Young man, I forgive you for your sins!"

6 Now some teachers of the Jewish law were there. They were thinking to themselves,
7 "This man should not be saying that he forgives sins. The only one who can forgive sins is
God. So, he is insulting God!"

8 As soon as they thought that, Jesus realized what they were thinking to themselves. He
told them, "You should not be thinking to yourselves that I cannot forgive sins. 9 You may
think that it is easy to claim to forgive this man who cannot move for his sins, since it is difficult
to prove whether this has happened. Similarly, you may think that it is difficult to tell this man
who cannot move to stand up, carry his sleeping pad, and walk around, since it is easy to prove
whether this has happened. 10 However, I want you to know that God has authorized me, the

Son of Man, to forgive people on earth for their sins." So, he said to the man who could not move, **11** "Here is what I want you to do: stand up, carry your sleeping pad, and go home!"

12 Then the man stood up! As soon as **he did that**, he carried his sleeping pad and left. Everyone saw him **do those things**, and it impressed all of them. They praised God and declared that they had never seen anything like that before.

13 Then Jesus returned to the area next to the Sea of Galilee. A large group of people approached him, and he instructed them. **14** As Jesus was walking along, he noticed a man whose name was Levi. He was the son of a man whose name was Alphaeus. Levi was sitting in the booth **where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required**. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my apprentice!" So, Levi stood up and went with him as his apprentice. **15** Later, Jesus was feasting in Levi's home. Many people who collected taxes and other sinful people feasted with Jesus and his apprentices. All these people went with Jesus as his apprentices.

16 Then, some Pharisees who taught the Jewish law noticed that Jesus was eating food with sinful people and people who collected taxes. They told Jesus' apprentices, "He should not be feasting with people who collect taxes and other sinful people."

17 Jesus learned what they said. He told them, "People who are well do not need a doctor. Rather, people who are sick need a doctor. I am here not to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. Rather, **I invite** those who know that they have sinned **to come to me**."

18 One day, the Pharisees and the apprentices of John the Baptizer were abstaining from eating in order to please God. Meanwhile, some people visited Jesus. They asked him, "The apprentices of John the Baptizer and the apprentices of the Pharisees are abstaining from eating in order to please God. However, your apprentices do not do so. Why not?"

19 Jesus answered, "The friends of the bridegroom do not abstain from eating while the wedding celebration is still going on. Indeed, they continue to eat as long as the wedding celebration continues. **20** However, someday the bridegroom will no longer be with his friends. Then they will abstain from eating.

21 People do not attach a piece of unshrunken cloth on old clothing in order to mend a hole. However, suppose that they did. When they washed the garment, the new piece of cloth would shrink and completely rip out of the old clothing. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! 22 Similarly, people do not put fresh wine into old skin bags to store it. However, suppose that they did. The fresh wine would ferment and expand and tear open the skin bags. That would ruin the wine and the skin bags. So, in contrast, people put fresh wine into new skin bags."

23 Later, Jesus and his apprentices were walking through grain fields during one of the Jewish days of rest. As the apprentices were walking along, they picked some grain and ate it. 24 So, some Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look! Your apprentices should not be working on a Jewish day of rest. Our law forbids us to do that."

25 Jesus replied, "Consider the story in the Scriptures about what King David did when he and the men who were with him became very hungry but did not have any food. 26 As you know, David entered the sacred tent while Abiathar was the ruling priest. He ate some of the bread that had been on display before God, and he had the men who were with him eat some of it too. He did that even though the law allowed only the priests to eat that bread."

27 Then Jesus told the Pharisees, "God did not create humans because of the Jewish day of rest. Rather, he created the Jewish day of rest because of humans. 28 So then, I, the Son of Man, can decide what is right for people to do even during the Jewish day of rest!"

3 1 Then Jesus again visited the Jewish meeting place there. A certain man also was there. He could not move his hand. 2 Since it was the Jewish day of rest, the Pharisees who were there focused on Jesus to see whether he would cure the man. They wanted to accuse Jesus of disobeying the laws about not working on the Sabbath. 3 Then Jesus told the man who could not move his hand, "Stand here in front of everyone!" So, the man stood there.

4 Then Jesus told the Pharisees, "You know that the laws that God gave Moses allow people to do what is good and to rescue people on Jewish days of rest. They do not allow people to do what is wrong and to kill people on Jewish days of rest." However, the Pharisees did not respond to him.

5 So Jesus stared at them angrily. Because they stubbornly refused to listen to him, he became very sad. Then Jesus commanded the man, “Extend the hand **that you cannot move**!” The man extended his hand, and he could move it again. **6** Then the Pharisees left **the Jewish meeting place**. As soon as **they left**, they met with some people who supported King Herod. Together, they started planning how they could kill Jesus.

7 Jesus and his apprentices went back to the Sea of Galilee. Very many people from the region of Galilee went with him. Also, there were more people from the region of Judea, **8** from the city of Jerusalem, from the region of Idumea, from the east side of the Jordan River, and from the regions around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Because they learned about all the things that Jesus was doing, all these many people went to where he was. **9-10** Further, because Jesus cured many people, many other people who were sick pushed forward in order to touch him. So, Jesus told his apprentices to prepare a boat for him **to get into**. That way, all those people would not crush him. **11** Also, when demons saw Jesus, they caused the people whom they controlled to kneel down in front of Jesus and yell, “You are the Son of God!” **12** Jesus frequently commanded the demons strongly that they should not tell people about him.

13 Then Jesus went up on a hill. He told the apprentices whom he chose to come to him there. They joined him on the hill. **14** He chose 12 men to be his closest apprentices and to proclaim **the good news**. He called them his representatives. **15** He also authorized them to force demons out of people. **16** Here are the 12 representatives that Jesus chose. He chose Simon, whom he called Peter. **17** He chose James, Zebedee’s son, and John, James’ **younger** brother. He called the two of them Boanerges, which means “men who are like thunder.” **18** He chose Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (who was Alphaeus’ son), Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot. **19** Finally, he chose Judas Iscariot. He was the one who helped Jesus’ enemies arrest him.

20 Then Jesus **and his apprentices** entered a certain house. A large group of people again assembled there. There were so many people that Jesus and his apprentices did not have enough time even to eat food. **21** Jesus’ relatives heard about what was happening. They thought that Jesus was insane. So, they traveled **from the town of Nazareth to where Jesus was** to force him to return with them.

22 Now some teachers of the Jewish law arrived from Jerusalem. They were telling people,
“Beelzebul controls this man. In fact, it is the leader of the demons who enables him to force
demons out of people!”

23 So Jesus told the people there to come to him. He used stories to teach them. He said,
“Satan does not enable people to force out his own demons! 24 Suppose that the people in one
nation fight against each other. That nation will not last. 25 Further, suppose that the people in
one household fight against each other. That household will not last. 26 Similarly, suppose that
Satan and his demons fight against one another. Satan would soon cease to rule over the
demons! 27 Here is what is really true: before thieves can break into the home of a strong man
and take his belongings, they must first tie up the strong man. After that, they can take the
belongings from his home. 28 God will forgive many people who sin in many ways or who
frequently insult God or others. What I have said is true. 29 However, God will not ever
forgive people who insult the Holy Spirit. They will always be guilty because of how they
sinned.”

30 Jesus spoke those things because the scribes had said, “A demon controls this man!”

31 Then Jesus’ mother and his younger brothers arrived. They waited outside the house
where he was. They asked someone to go in and ask him to come out to them. 32 A large group
of people were sitting with Jesus. They told him, “Your mother and your younger brothers are
waiting for you outside.”

33 Jesus replied, “I will tell you whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers.”

34 Then Jesus looked at the people who were sitting with him. He declared, “These are the
people whom I consider to be my mother and my brothers! 35 In fact, when a person does
what God wants, I consider that person to be my brother or sister or mother.”

4 1 Sometime later, Jesus again started to instruct people while he was next to the Sea of
Galilee. A very large group of people assembled to hear him. Because there were so many
people, he got into a boat on the sea and sat down to teach. All the people stood on the shore, by
the water. 2 Jesus began to use stories to instruct them about many things. As he was

instructing them, he said, [3] "Listen to this: a farmer began to plant some grain seeds [4] As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds flew down and ate those seeds up. [5] Other seeds fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. Because they were growing in shallow soil, the seeds sprouted very quickly. [6] Then, the sun shone on the new plants and dried them up. Then, because they did not have good roots, the plants died. [7] Other seeds fell onto an area full of thorny plants. These thorny plants grew quickly and crowded out the grain plants. So, the grain plants did not produce a crop.
[8] Finally, other seeds fell on fertile soil. They grew quickly, and they produced a crop. Some plants produced 30 **grains of wheat each**, others produced 60 **grains each**, and others produced 100 **grains each**."

[9] Then Jesus told them, "You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

[10] Later, when no one else was with them, Jesus' 12 representatives and some other apprentices asked Jesus to explain the stories he had told. [11] He replied, "God has revealed to you hidden things about his kingdom. However, I use only stories to instruct people who are not my apprentices. [12] That way, **just as you can read in the Scriptures,**

> 'They will look at things, but they will not really see them.
> They will hear things, but they will not learn from them.
> Otherwise, they would stop doing what is wrong, and God would forgive them.'"

[13] Then Jesus told his apprentices, "Unless you realize what that story means, you will not be able to realize what any of the other stories **that I tell** mean. [14] **In the story that I told you,** the seeds that the farmer planted represent the good news. [15] Some people are like the seeds that fell on the path. They hear the good news. However, as soon as they hear it, Satan comes and makes them forget the message that they heard. [16] Other people are like the seeds that fell on shallow soil on top of a layer of rocks. When they hear the good news, they rejoice and quickly believe it. [17] However, they are like plants without good roots, which do not live very long. In fact, when bad things happen or when people hurt them because they accepted the good news, they quickly stop believing it. [18] Other people are like the seeds that fell onto an area full of thorny plants. They hear the good news. [19] However, they continue to focus on things in this world. They try to become rich, even though being rich is not as helpful as they think it will be.

Also, they desire many other things. When they do those things, it makes the good news ineffective, just as thorny plants crowd out the good plants and keep them from producing a crop. **20** Finally, other people are like the seeds that fell on fertile soil. When they hear the good news, they believe it. They are like the plants that produced a crop. Some plants produced 30 **grains of wheat each**, others produced 60 **grains each**, and others produced 100 **grains each**."

21 Then he told the people who were there, "People do not bring an oil lamp **into a house** in order to cover it with a basket or a bench. Instead, they put it on a lampstand **so that it shines brightly**. **22** Here is what I mean: some things are secret, but that is only because God will **eventually** let everyone know about them. **23** You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

24 Then he told the people who were there, "Make sure that you are listening carefully **to what I tell you**. How carefully you listen is how much God will enable you to learn and understand. **25** God will reveal even more to people who already know some things **about the good news**. However, God will cause people who know very little **about the good news** to know nothing about it at all."

26 Then Jesus said, "Here is what God's kingdom is like: a farmer planted some seeds. **27** During a period of many days, those seeds started to grow. The farmer did not really know how they grew. **28** The plants grew out of the ground on their own. First, the stalks grew. Then, the parts where the seeds would appear grew. Finally, the grain seeds grew in that part. **29** As soon as the plants produced grain, it was time to harvest it. So, the farmer told people to cut down the plants and collect the grain."

30 Then Jesus said, "I would like us to consider together what God's kingdom is like. I will use a story to make sure that we all understand it. **31** Here is what it is like: someone plants a tiny mustard seed in the ground. This kind of seed is smaller than every other kind of seed in the world. **32** Once someone plants it, the seed **sprouts and** grows quickly. The plant becomes bigger than every other kind of plant that people grow. It has big branches. In fact, birds can land in the shade it creates and make nests there."

33 Jesus used many stories like these to teach the good news to the people who were there. He taught them as much as they could understand. **34** He taught them by using stories only. Later, when no one else was with them, he told his apprentices what all the stories meant.

35 When it was evening on the same day, Jesus told his apprentices, "Let us go **by boat** to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." **36** Since Jesus was already in the boat, the apprentices sailed away with Jesus from the large group of people. Other people sailed with them in other boats. **37** Then there was a powerful windstorm! High waves were splashing into the boat and quickly filling it up with water.

38 Meanwhile, Jesus was in the back part of the boat. He was asleep, with his head on a pillow. The apprentices woke him up and told him, "Instructor! We are going to die. You should be paying attention!"

39 Then Jesus got up. He scolded the wind. He told the water, "Become still!" The wind stopped blowing, and everything became calm. **40** Then Jesus told his apprentices, "You should not be so afraid. You should be trusting God by now!"

41 The apprentices became very afraid. They kept asking each other, "Who could Jesus be? The wind and the water do what he says!"

5 **1** Then Jesus and his apprentices arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, in the region where the Gerasene people lived. **2** As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a man whom a demon controlled came up to him. This man had come from the burial caves. **3** In fact, he lived in the burial caves. The people who lived nearby could not tie him up, not even with **metal** chains. **4** In the past, they had frequently tied him up with **metal** chains and bonds. However, he always snapped the **metal** chains and broke apart the bonds. He was so strong that nobody could overpower him. **5** All day long, this man would yell and hurt himself with rocks while he wandered around among the burial caves and the hills.

6 **After Jesus arrived,** this man saw him from far away. He ran to where Jesus was and knelt before him. **7-8** Then Jesus said, "You demon, leave this man!"

Then the demon shouted loudly. It said, “Jesus, Son of the greatest God, leave me alone! I want you to have God guarantee that you will not make me suffer.”

9 Then Jesus asked the man, “What do people call you?”

He replied, “People call me ‘Thousands.’ **They call me that** because there are many of us demons in this man.” **10** Then the demon repeatedly urged Jesus not to make the many demons leave that area.

11 While all that was happening, a large herd of pigs was grazing nearby on a hillside.
12 The demons urged Jesus, “**When you force us out of this man,** please allow us to go to those pigs. That way, we can control them.”

13 Jesus allowed them to do that. So, the demons left the man and began to control the pigs. Then, the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the Sea of Galilee! There were about 2,000 of them, and they drowned there in the sea.

14 Then those who were taking care of the pigs ran away. They told all the people who lived around them **about what they had seen**. Those people went to see what had happened.
15 When they arrived where Jesus was, they saw the man whom the thousands of demons had controlled. He was sitting down, he had clothes on, and he was thinking normally. So, **they realized how powerful Jesus must be, and** they became afraid. **16** The people who had seen what Jesus did explained everything to the people who had just arrived. They told them about what Jesus did for the man whom the demons had controlled. They also told them what happened to the pigs. **17** Then the people who were there started to urge Jesus to leave their area.

18 While Jesus was entering the boat **to leave**, the man whom the demons had controlled urged Jesus to allow him to go with Jesus as his apprentice. **19** However, Jesus did not allow the man **to go with him**. Instead, he told him, “Go home to your friends and family. Tell them about everything that the Lord **God** has done for you and how he has helped you.” **20** So, the man traveled around the region of the Ten Towns. He told people how much Jesus had done for him. **What the man said** impressed all the people **who heard it**.

21 Meanwhile, Jesus **and his apprentices** sailed in a boat back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus stayed next to the Sea of Galilee, and a large group of people assembled near

him. **22** Then, a certain man arrived. He was a leader of the Jewish meeting place there. His name was Jairus. When he saw Jesus, Jairus knelt before him. **23** He urged Jesus repeatedly, "My young daughter is about to die. Please come **with me** and touch her. That way, you will rescue her, and she will stay alive."

24 So Jesus **and his apprentices** left with Jairus **to go to his house**.

A large group of people went with them, and they were almost crushing Jesus. **25** Now there was a woman **in the crowd** who had been suffering for 12 years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. **26** **During those 12 years,** she had spent all the money that she had to pay for doctors. However, these doctors only hurt her more. So, she did not get any better. Instead, she actually became more sick. **27-28** When she learned what Jesus had done, she thought, "Just touching Jesus' clothing will cure me." So, in the large group of people, she approached Jesus from behind. She touched his robe. **29** As soon as **she did that,** her bleeding stopped. She could feel inside herself that she was no longer sick.

30 As soon as **she touched his robe**, Jesus recognized that someone had benefited from how powerful he was. So, in the middle of the large group of people, he spun around and asked, "Which of you touched my clothing?"

31 His apprentices replied, "Look at the large group of people that is almost crushing you! **Probably many people have touched you.** So, it does not make sense to ask who touched you."

32 However, Jesus kept trying to see the person who had touched his clothes. **33** Then the woman came up to Jesus. She realized what had happened, and she shook because she was afraid. She knelt before Jesus and told him exactly what had happened. **34** Jesus replied, "Young woman, because you believed **that I could heal you**, you are now well. Now go on your way, and may God make you peaceful. You will not be sick in that way again."

35 While Jesus was still talking **with that woman**, some messengers arrived from the house of Jairus, the leader of the Jewish meeting place. They told Jairus, "Your daughter is dead. You should not continue to ask the instructor to help."

36 Jesus listened to what the messengers said. Then, he told Jairus, "You should stop being afraid! You just need to trust **that I can help your daughter**."

37 Then Jesus took only Peter, James, and James' younger brother John with him. He did not allow anyone else to come with them. 38 Then they arrived at the house of Jairus, the leader of the Jewish meeting place. Jesus noticed that the people there were making a lot of noise. They were crying very sorrowfully. 39 Then Jesus went into the house. He told the people there, "You should not be making much noise and crying sorrowfully! The young woman is not dead! She is only sleeping." 40 The people made fun of him for saying that.

However, Jesus made all of them leave the house. Then, he went to where the young woman was. He took with him the young woman's father and mother as well as Peter, James, and John. 41 Jesus took hold of the young woman's hand. He said to her, "Talitha koum!" That means, "Young woman, I tell you to get up!" 42 As soon as Jesus said that, the young woman became alive again, stood up, and walked around (in fact, she was 12 years old). That greatly impressed everyone who was there. 43 Jesus ordered them firmly, "Do not tell anyone about what I have done here!" Also, he told them to serve the young woman some food to eat.

6 1 After that, Jesus left the city of Capernaum. He traveled to the city of Nazareth, where he had grown up. His apprentices went with him. 2 When it was the Jewish day of rest, he started to instruct the people there when they gathered in the Jewish meeting place. What they heard him say impressed the many people who were there. They said to each other, "We do not know how this man is able to do what he does. We do not know how he is so wise and does such powerful things. 3 He is just a woodworker! He is Mary's son, and he is an older brother to James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. His younger sisters live here in our town." So, these people rejected Jesus.

4 So, Jesus told them, "The only ones who do not respect people who speak for God are those from where they grew up, their clans, and their own families."

5 Jesus could do very few powerful things in that place. He only touched a few people who were sick and cured them. 6 How little the people trusted him surprised Jesus. After that, Jesus traveled through the small towns in that area, and he instructed the people there.

7 One day, Jesus told his 12 representatives to come to him. He told them that he was going to have them travel around in groups of two. He authorized them to force demons out of people.

8-9 He told them to wear sandals and to bring a walking stick. However, he instructed them not to pack anything else to bring with them, including food, a traveler's bag, money, or an extra shirt. **10** He also told them, "When someone welcomes you into their home, continue to stay there until you leave that area. **11** Whenever people in a certain place do not welcome you or listen to you, you should leave **that place**. As you are going, shake the dust from that place off your feet to warn them **that God will punish them**."

12 Then Jesus' 12 representatives left **to travel around**. They preached that people should stop doing what was wrong. **13** They forced demons out of many people. They put olive oil on many people who were sick. Then, they cured them.

14 By this time, Jesus had become famous. So, King Herod Antipas**, the ruler over the region of Galilee,** heard **people talking** about him. Some people declared, "God has made John the Baptizer alive again **as Jesus**, and that is why he does these powerful things."

15 Other people declared, "He is the prophet Elijah**, who has returned to us**."

Other people declared, "He is a person who speaks for God, just like one of the people who spoke for God long ago."

16 King Herod Antipas listened **to those people**. Then he declared, "I had someone cut John the Baptizer's head off! However, God must have made him alive again **as Jesus**."

17-18 **Herod said that because John had already died.** Here is how that happened: Herod married Herodias, who had previously been the wife of Herod's brother Philip. John the Baptizer told Herod, "Our law forbids you to marry Herodias, your sister-in-law." So, Herod told his soldiers to go and arrest John. They tied him up and put him in jail. **19-20** Herodias was so upset with John that she wanted to have someone execute him. However, Herod realized that God had set John apart and that John did what was right. So, Herod was afraid **to do anything to John**. Also, he prevented Herodias from doing what she wanted **to John**. Whenever Herod listened to John, he was not sure how to respond, but he enjoyed listening to him.

21 Then, one day, Herodias realized that she might be able **to have someone execute John**. It was Herod's birthday, and he had invited his important officials, some military commanders,

and the most important people in the region of Galilee to feast with him. **22** While they were feasting, Herod's stepdaughter, the daughter of Herodias, came in. She danced for Herod and his guests, and they greatly enjoyed her dancing. So, King Herod told her, "I will give you whatever you request!" **23** Further, he solemnly promised, "You can even ask for half of what I rule over. I will still give you whatever you request!"

24 So, the young woman left that place and went to her mother, Herodias. She asked her mother, "What should I request?"

Her mother replied, "Request that someone cut off John the Baptizer's head and give it to you."

25 As soon as her mother said that, the young woman hurried back to King Herod. She told him, "I want you to cut off John the Baptizer's head right now and bring it to me on a plate!"

26 King Herod was sad about what she asked for. However, because he had solemnly promised in front of all his guests to give her what she asked for, he decided to do what she requested. **27** So, King Herod told a soldier to go to the jail where John was, cut off his head, and bring his head back. The soldier left and cut off John's head while he was in jail. **28** Then, the soldier put John's head on a plate and gave it to the young woman. She left and gave it to her mother, Herodias. **29** When John's apprentices learned what had happened, they went to the jail. They took John's dead body and buried it.

30 As for Jesus' representatives, they returned to Jesus from where they had traveled. They told him about everything that they had done and everything that they had instructed people about. **31** Now people were arriving and leaving where they were all the time. In fact, they did not even have enough time to eat food. So, Jesus told his representatives, "Come to a place where no one lives and where no one else will be with us. Then, you can rest some!"

32 So, they sailed in a boat to a place where no one lived and where no one else would be with them. **33** Now people noticed them sailing away. Many of those people realized that it was Jesus and his apprentices. So, they left all their towns and ran to where Jesus and his apprentices were sailing. They got there before Jesus and his apprentices did! **34** When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large group of people. He noticed that they were like sheep who

did not have a sheepherder to lead them and to take care of them. So, he pitied them and started to instruct them about many things.

35 When it was already late in the day, the apprentices approached Jesus. They said to him, "This is a place where no one lives, and it is already late in the day. **36** So, please tell these people to walk to the places that are near us, where they can buy food to eat."

37 Jesus replied, "I want you to provide them with food to eat!"

They responded, "Surely you do not want us to go and spend 200 coins to buy enough loaves of bread to provide these people with food!"

38 Then Jesus asked his apprentices, "How many loaves of bread do you have? Find out!"

Once they had found out how many they had, they told Jesus, "We have five loaves of bread and two fish."

39 Then Jesus told all the people who were there to sit down in groups on the fresh grass that was growing on the ground. **40** So, they sat down in groups. Some groups had 100 people, and some groups had 50 people. **41** He picked up the five loaves of bread and the two fish. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his apprentices. That way, they could serve them to the people who were there. He similarly had his apprentices serve the two fish to everyone who was there. **42** Everyone ate the bread and the fish, and they all had enough to eat. **43** Then the apprentices gathered what was left of the bread and fish. They filled 12 large containers with the leftovers! **44** There were about 5,000 men who ate the bread and fish.

45 As soon as everyone finished eating, Jesus had his apprentices get into a boat and sail without him across the Sea of Galilee to the town of Bethsaida. He stayed behind to tell the large group of people to go home. **46** After he said goodbye to the people who were there, he walked to the top of a hill to pray to God. **47** When it became dark, the apprentices were in the boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Meanwhile, Jesus was on the hill by himself. **48** Now the wind was blowing from where the apprentices wanted to go, so they were struggling to row the boat across the Sea of Galilee. Jesus noticed that. So, soon before morning, he joined them.

He was walking on top of the Sea of Galilee! He planned to walk right past them. **49-50** When the apprentices saw Jesus walking on top of the Sea of Galilee, it disturbed them. **They did not know that it was Jesus, so** they thought that he must be a dangerous spiritual being. So, they shouted loudly.

However, as soon as **they shouted loudly**, Jesus told them, "Do not worry! I am **Jesus**. Stop being afraid!" **51** Then Jesus joined the apprentices in the boat. At that moment, the wind stopped blowing. **When that happened,** it impressed them greatly. **52** **They reacted that way** because they did not realize what it meant **when Jesus fed the large group of people with** the loaves of bread. In fact, they stubbornly refused to understand it.

53 After Jesus and his apprentices finished sailing across the Sea of Galilee, they landed on the shore in the region of Gennesaret. They tied the boat there. **54** As soon as they got out of the boat, people realized that Jesus was there. **55** Those people hurried to all the places within that region. Whenever people **in those places** learned that Jesus was in a specific place, they started to bring there on sleeping pads many other people who were sick. **56** Jesus visited many villages, towns, and farms. Wherever he visited, people put those who were sick in the open areas. These people who were sick asked Jesus to allow them just to touch the hem of his robe. Everyone who did so became healthy.

7 **1** After that, some Pharisees and some teachers of the Jewish law arrived from the city of Jerusalem. They assembled where Jesus was. **2** Then, they noticed that some of Jesus' apprentices did not cleanse their hands before eating food. So, their hands were unclean **when they ate the food**. **3** **The Pharisees and the teachers of the Jewish law noticed that** because most Jewish people, and especially the Pharisees, always cleanse their hands in a special way before they eat food. That is the teaching that they received from their ancestors.

4 Also, **when they come home** from the open areas in their towns, they always cleanse themselves before they eat food. They have many other similar teachings. **For example,** they cleanse many different kinds of dishes and containers. **5** So, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Jewish law told Jesus, "Your apprentices have unclean hands when they eat food. They are disobeying the teachings we received from our ancestors. They should not do that!"

6 Jesus replied, “Isaiah the prophet was right when God spoke through him about you. You say that you obey God, but you really do not! Here is what Isaiah wrote:

‘You people treat me respectfully when you talk,
but you do not really care about me.
7 When you worship me, it is useless.
That is because you use only what humans have commanded to instruct others.’

8 You carefully obey human teachings, but you ignore the laws that God gave us.”

9 Further, Jesus told them, “You easily stop obeying the laws that God gave us in order to obey the teachings that you received. You should not be good at doing that! 10 For example, Moses gave this law: ‘Treat your parents respectfully.’ He also gave this law: ‘Execute anyone who insults his or her parents.’ 11 However, you tell people that they can say to their parents, ‘I designated as Corban everything that I could have used to provide for you.’ (That means that they gave it to God.) 12 Then, you allow them to stop helping their parents. 13 In that way, you use what you learned and teach to ignore what God commanded. There are many things that you do that are like that.”

14 Then Jesus again told the large group of people to come to him. He told them, “You all should listen to what I am about to say and learn from it. 15 Whatever people eat cannot make them unclean. Rather, it is what people do and say that makes them unclean. 16 [You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!]”

17 Later, Jesus went into a house with his apprentices, away from the large group of people. Then, the apprentices asked him to explain the example he had given. 18 Jesus answered, “So, you too have not yet learned what I mean. You should know that whatever people eat cannot make them unclean. 19 In fact, what people eat does not become part of what they think. Rather, it simply goes into their stomachs. Eventually, their bodies expel what they ate into toilets.” So, Jesus was implying that no food is unclean.

20 Then Jesus told them, “It is what people do and say that makes them unclean. 21 In fact, it is because of what people think and care about that they think wrong things. They have improper sex, steal things, and kill others. 22 They are sexually unfaithful to their spouses,

want more than they need, and do what is evil. They trick others, fail to restrain themselves, and are jealous. They say bad things about God or others, think too highly of themselves, and are foolish. 23 People do and say those wicked things, and that makes them unclean."

24 After that, Jesus and his apprentices left the region of Gennesaret. They traveled to the areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Jesus tried to keep people from learning where he was staying. However, people soon found out where he was. 25 In fact, as soon as he arrived, a certain woman learned about him. A demon was controlling this woman's young daughter. So, she walked to where Jesus was and knelt before him. 26 It is important to know that this woman was not Jewish. Instead, her ancestors were people from the regions of Syria and Phoenicia. While she was kneeling before Jesus, she begged him to force the demon out of her daughter.

27 Jesus told her, "Suppose that someone takes food for children and gives it to dogs instead. That is not appropriate! So, the children should eat before the dogs do. That is why I am not helping you."

28 The woman replied, "My Lord, what you say is correct. However, dogs lying nearby do eat leftovers from the children's food. What I am asking you to do is like those leftovers."

29 Jesus replied, "Because of what you have said, I will do what you asked. You can go home. I have forced the demon to stop controlling your daughter."

30 So, the woman went home. She saw that her daughter was resting. The demon had stopped controlling her.

31 Then, Jesus and his apprentices left the areas near the city of Tyre. They walked through the areas near the city of Sidon and eventually arrived near the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Ten Towns. 32 Then, people led to Jesus a man who could not hear and who could not speak well. They urged Jesus to heal him by touching him. 33 So, Jesus brought the man to a place where no one from the large group of people was with them. He stuck one of his fingers into each of the man's ears. Then, he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 Next, Jesus groaned as he prayed to God. Then he told the man, "Ephphatha!" That means, "Open up!" 35 After that, the man could hear. Also, Jesus had corrected what was wrong with his mouth, so he could speak properly.

36 After that, Jesus ordered the people who were nearby not to tell anyone about what he had done. However, every time he ordered them not to do so, they told even more people about what he had done. **37** When people learned what Jesus had done, it greatly impressed them. They declared, “Everything that he does is good! He enables people who could not hear to hear. He enables people who could not speak to speak.”

8 **1** Sometime later, there was again a large group of people near Jesus, and they did not have any food to eat. So, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He told them, **2** “I pity the large group of people. They have already spent three days with me, and they do not have any food to eat. **3** Further, suppose that I tell them to go home while they are hungry. Some of them live far away from here. They would pass out while they are walking home.”

4 His apprentices replied, “In this place where no one lives, no one has enough food for these people to have enough to eat!”

5 Then Jesus asked them, “How many loaves of bread do you have with you?”

They replied, “We have with us seven loaves of bread.”

6 Then Jesus told the large group of people to sit down on the ground. He picked up the seven loaves of bread. Then he thanked God for the food. After that, he tore the bread into pieces and gave the pieces to his apprentices. That way, they could serve them to the large group of people, which they did. **7** The apprentices also had some little fish. So, Jesus thanked God for these fish and told the apprentices to serve them too to the large group of people. **8** The people ate the food, and they had enough to eat. Then the apprentices gathered the food that was left. They filled seven large containers! **9** About 4,000 people were there. Then Jesus told them to go home. **10** As soon as he told them that, Jesus and his apprentices climbed into a boat. They sailed to the region of Dalmanutha.

11 Some Pharisees came to Jesus and started to debate with him. They wanted to investigate him, so they asked him to perform a miracle that showed that God had sent him. **12** Jesus groaned to himself. Then he said, “You people who are alive right now should not ask me to perform a miracle that proves that God sent me. I will never do that kind of miracle for you people! What I have said is true.”

13 Then Jesus went away from the Pharisees. He **and his apprentices** again entered a boat and sailed to the other side **of the Sea of Galilee**. **14** Now the apprentices had not remembered to pack any food. In fact, the only food that they had in the boat was one loaf of bread. **15** **While they were sailing,** Jesus ordered the apprentices, "Make sure that you guard against the yeast that the Pharisees use and the yeast that Herod uses."

16 Then the apprentices told each other that they had very little food.

17 Jesus realized **what they were saying to each other**. He told them, "You should not be telling each other that you have very little food. You should already realize **what I can do**! However, you stubbornly refuse to understand it. **18** You look at things, but you do not really see them. You hear things, but you do not really listen. You should remember **what I have done**! **19** When I tore five loaves of bread into pieces and used them to feed 5,000 people, you gathered what was left of the food. How many large containers did you fill **with the leftovers**?"

The apprentices replied, "**We filled** 12 **large containers**."

20 **Then Jesus asked,** "Again, when **I tore** seven **loaves of bread into pieces** and used them to feed 4,000 people, you gathered the food that was left. How many large containers did you fill?"

The apprentices replied, "**We filled** seven **large containers**."

21 Then Jesus told his apprentices, "You should already realize **what I can do**!"

22 After that, Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the town of Bethsaida. The people there took a blind man to Jesus. They urged Jesus to **heal the man** by touching him. **23** So, Jesus took one of the blind man's hands. He brought the blind man outside the town. Then Jesus spat saliva onto the man's eyes, and Jesus touched him. After that, he asked the man, "Can you see anything?"

24 So, the man looked around. He said, "**Yes,** I can see people! They look like trees, but I can tell that they are walking around."

25 After that, Jesus again touched the blind man's eyes. When the man looked around carefully, he could see everything properly. Jesus had cured him! **26** Jesus commanded the man, "Do not go into the town **of Bethsaida**!" Then he told the man to go home.

27 After that, Jesus and his apprentices left **the town of Bethsaida** and walked toward the small towns near the city of Caesarea Philippi. While they were walking, Jesus asked his apprentices, "Who do people say that I really am?"

28 The apprentices replied, "People say that you are one of the prophets **who has come back to life**. **More specifically,** some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Other people say that you are the prophet Elijah."

29 Then Jesus asked them, "As for you, who do you say that I really am?"

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah!"

30 Then Jesus ordered the apprentices not to tell anyone who he really was.

31 After that, Jesus started to instruct his apprentices about what had to happen to him, the Son of Man. People would hurt him very much. The Jewish leaders, the ruling priests, and the teachers of the Jewish law would refuse to listen to him. Then, people would kill him. Three days after he died, he would live again. **32** Jesus told that to them clearly. Then Peter spoke to Jesus privately. He started to scold him.

33 Jesus turned around and looked at his **other** apprentices. Then he scolded Peter, "Do not try to stop me. You are behaving as Satan does! You are thinking about what humans care about instead of thinking about what God cares about."

34 Then Jesus told his apprentices and the large group of people to come to him. He told them, "People who want to come with me and be my apprentices must refuse to do what they want to do. They must be willing to suffer or die as if they were carrying their own crosses when they come with me as my apprentices. **35** **That is** because people who are willing to do anything to stay alive will not truly live. However, people who are willing to die because they are my apprentices and because they believe the good news will truly live. **36** Suppose that some people acquire everything they could possibly want. However, they can no longer truly

live. That is not worth it! 37 In fact, people cannot acquire anything that is as valuable as truly
living. 38 The men and women who are alive right now sin often and do not remain faithful.
As they live among those men and women, some people consider it shameful to say that they
believe in me and what I say. Then I, the Son of Man, will consider it shameful to say that
those people belong to me. That will happen when I return with the angels whom God has set
apart. At that time, I will be as glorious as God my Father."

9 1 Then Jesus told his apprentices and the large group of people, "Some of you who are
here with me will definitely see God powerfully establish his kingdom before you die. What I
have said is true!"

2 Six days later, Jesus climbed up a tall mountain. He had Peter, James, and John go with
him. No one else was with them. Then, the three apprentices saw Jesus change how he
appeared. 3 His clothes became very bright white. They were whiter than anyone on earth
could make them by bleaching them. 4 After that, Elijah and Moses, **who were prophets from long ago,** appeared to the three apprentices! These prophets were speaking to Jesus.

5 Peter responded by saying to Jesus, "Teacher, it is appropriate for all of us to be here. We
should build three shelters. You, Moses, and Elijah can each use one." 6 **Peter said that** because
he and the other two apprentices were extremely afraid. So, he did not know how to respond **to what he saw**.

7 Then a cloud covered all of them! God spoke from the cloud, "This man is my Son, the
one whom I love dearly. Do what he says."

8 When the three apprentices looked around, suddenly, the only person whom they still
saw with them was Jesus.

9 While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus told them that they should not tell
anyone about what they had just seen until he, the Son of Man, had become alive again. 10 So
they did not tell others about what had happened. However, they talked with each other about
what it meant when Jesus said that he would become alive again.

11 Then those three apprentices asked Jesus, “The teachers of the Jewish law tell us that the prophet Elijah has to be here before **the Messiah gets here**. Are they right about that?”

12 Jesus replied, “**Yes, the prophet** Elijah must be here before **the Messiah gets here**. He will make everything as it should be. However, consider this: **the prophets** wrote in the Scriptures that people would reject me, the Son of Man, and hurt me very much. **13** **That makes sense only because of** what I am about to tell you. **The prophet** Elijah has already been here. Further, people treated him badly, just as **the prophets** wrote in the Scriptures about him.”

14 Then Jesus and those three apprentices arrived where the other apprentices were. They saw a large group of people around the other apprentices. Some teachers of the Jewish laws were debating with them. **15** As soon as **Jesus arrived**, the large group of people noticed him, and it surprised them very much. So, they hurried to him and said hello to him.

16 Then Jesus asked his apprentices, “What are you debating with the teachers of the Jewish law?”

17 A man in the large group of people replied, “Instructor, I came here to you with my son **so that you would heal him**. A demon controls him and keeps him from speaking. **18** Whenever the demon chooses, it makes my son fall down. Then, my son drools, grinds his teeth together, and becomes rigid. I asked your apprentices to force the demon out of him. However, they could not **do it**.”

19 Jesus replied to them, “You people who are alive right now do not believe! It is hard for me to live here with you. It is difficult for me to be patient with you.” **Then he said to them,** “Bring the man’s son to me!”

20 So, some people brought the man’s son to Jesus. As soon as the demon noticed Jesus, it shook the man’s son violently. He fell down and writhed around as he drooled.

21 Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

The boy’s father replied, “**He has been like this** since he was a child. **22** The demon also frequently makes him fall into fires and bodies of water in order to kill him. So, if you can do so, please pity us and help us!”

23 Jesus replied, “You should not talk about whether I can **help you**. God can do anything for people who trust him!”

24 As soon as **Jesus said that**, the boy’s father shouted, “I do trust **God**. Please help me trust **him** more!”

25 Then Jesus noticed that a large group of people was quickly assembling. So, he commanded the demon **who was controlling the man’s son** to stop **doing so**. He said, “You demon who are keeping this boy from speaking and hearing, I tell you to stop controlling him! You may not control him again.”

26 The demon shouted and shook the boy violently. Then it stopped controlling him. After that, the boy lay so still that he looked like a corpse. In fact, many people said that he was dead. **27** However, Jesus took hold of the boy’s hand and helped him get up. The boy stood up!

28 Later, Jesus entered a house, and only his apprentices were with him. They asked him, “Why could we not force out that demon?”

29 Jesus replied, “You can only force this type of demon out by praying and by not eating in order to please God.”

30 After Jesus and his apprentices left that area, they traveled through the region of Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone else to know **where he was**. **31** **Jesus did not want people to know where they were** because he was instructing his apprentices. He told them, “Somebody will help my enemies arrest me, the Son of Man. They will have people kill me. Then, three days after I die, I will live again.” **32** However, the apprentices did not understand what Jesus was telling them, and they were afraid to ask him **what he meant**.

33 Then Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the town of Capernaum. When they were in the house **where they were staying**, Jesus asked them, “What were you arguing about while we were walking here?” **34** However, while the apprentices were walking, they had been arguing with each other about which one of them was the most important. So, they did not answer **Jesus**.

35 Then Jesus sat down. He called his 12 representatives to come close to him, and then he said to them, “If anyone wants God to consider him to be the most important person of all, he must consider himself to be the least important person of all, and he must serve everyone else.”

36 Then Jesus had a young child stand among them. He hugged the child, and he told his apprentices, **37** “When people, because they are my apprentices, welcome any young child such as this one here, it is the same as welcoming me. Further, when people welcome me, they are also welcoming God, who sent me here.”

38 John said to Jesus, “Instructor, we noticed someone who was forcing demons out of people. He claimed that he represented you as he did that. So, we told him to stop doing that, because he was not one of us apprentices.”

39 Jesus said, “People will not say bad things about me soon after doing something powerful while they claim to represent me. Because of that, do not tell that man to stop forcing demons out of people. **40** I say that because those who are not opposing us are supporting us. **41** As for those who offer you water to drink because they know that you are apprentices of me, the Messiah, God will most certainly reward them. What I have said is true.

42 On the other hand, suppose that an insignificant person who trusts me sinned because of certain people. God will punish those people so severely that they would prefer to have someone tie a heavy stone around their necks and cast them into the ocean. **43** Suppose that you sinned because you touched something. You should never do that again, even if you have to chop off your hands to make sure of it! You should respond that drastically because it is better for you to truly live without hands than to have both hands but end up in hell, which is like a fire that never goes out. **44** [In that place maggots feed on the people there forever, and the fires never go out.] **45** Suppose that you sinned because you went somewhere. You should never do that again, even if you have to chop off your feet to make sure of it! You should respond that drastically because it is better for you to truly live without feet than to have both feet but end up in hell. **46** [In that place maggots feed on the people there forever, and the fires never go out.]

47 Suppose that you sinned because you looked at something. You should never do that again, even if you have to remove your eyes to make sure of it! You should respond that drastically because it is better for you to participate in God’s kingdom with only one eye than to

have both eyes but end up in hell. **48** In that place maggots feed on the people there forever,
and the fires never go out.

49 Indeed, God will treat everyone like an offering that people season and burn.

50 Salt is very useful. However, if salt were to stop seasoning food well, you cannot make
it season food well again. Be people who make this world better, just as salt makes food better.
Also, live peacefully with each other."

10 **1** After that, Jesus **and his apprentices** left the town of Capernaum. They traveled to the
region of Judea and to the east side of the Jordan River. Yet again, large groups of people
assembled where Jesus was. Jesus instructed them, as he usually did.

2 Then some Pharisees came to Jesus and asked him, "Does our law allow a husband to
divorce his wife?" **They asked that** in order to investigate him.

3 Jesus replied, "What did Moses include in our Law **about this issue**?"

4 They answered, "Moses allowed each husband to give **his wife** a document that states that
he is divorcing her. Then, he could divorce her."

5 Jesus told them, "Moses knew that you were unwilling to obey. That is why he included
in the Law what you just said. **6** However, when God first created everything, **as you can read
in the Scriptures**, he created people to be male and female. **7** **You can also read in the Scriptures**
that is why men**, when they marry,** no longer live with their parents, **8** and each husband and
wife together become like one person. Consequently, each husband and wife are not like two
different people any longer. Rather, they are like one person. **9** Since that is true, no one should
divide people whom God has united."

10 Later, when they were in a house again, the apprentices asked Jesus about what he had
said. **11** Jesus told them, "When a man divorces his wife and marries another woman, he sins
against his first wife by disobeying what God commanded about being sexually faithful to
one's spouse. **12** Also, when a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she
disobeys what God commanded about being sexually faithful to one's spouse."

13 Sometime later, some people took young children to Jesus. They wanted him to bless
the children by touching them. However, the apprentices told them to stop. 14 When Jesus
noticed what they were doing, he was very upset. He told his apprentices, “Allow the young
children to come here. Do not stop them! I say that because they and people like them are part
of God’s kingdom. 15 You must be like young children when you welcome God’s kingdom.
That is the only way to participate in God’s kingdom. What I have said is true.” 16 Then Jesus
hugged the young children. He blessed them by touching them.

17 One day, Jesus was walking along with his disciples. A certain person ran to where he
was and bowed down before him. He said, “Instructor, you are a good person! What is
something that I can do so that I will live with God forever?”

18 Jesus replied, “You should not so quickly call me a good person! God is the only one
who is good. 19 But to answer your question, you know what God commanded: Do not murder
others. Do not be sexually unfaithful to your spouse. Do not steal things. Do not speak what is
untrue. Do not cheat people. Treat your parents respectfully.”

20 The man replied, “Instructor, I have obeyed all those things that God commanded ever
since I was young.”

21 Then, Jesus looked at the man and cared for him. He said to the man, “There is one
thing that you have not yet done. Go home and sell what you own. Give that money to poor
people. If you do that, God will reward you in heaven. Then, come with me as my apprentice.”

22 However, the man was rich and did not want to lose what he owned. So, he was upset by
what Jesus said. He felt very sad and left. 23 Then Jesus looked at his apprentices. He told
them, “It is very hard for rich people to participate in God’s kingdom!”

24 What Jesus said surprised the apprentices. Jesus responded by saying again, “My dear
apprentices, it is very hard to participate in God’s kingdom. 25 Large animals like camels
cannot fit into very small spaces. However, it is even harder for rich people to participate in
God’s kingdom.”

26 That greatly surprised the apprentices. They told Jesus, “It must be that God does not
actually rescue anyone!”

27 Jesus looked directly at his apprentices. He said, “God can do anything! So, people cannot **rescue themselves**, but God can **rescue them**.”

28 Peter started to tell Jesus, “We left behind everything we had and went with you as your apprentices!”

29 Jesus replied, “What I am about to say is true. Some people leave behind houses, siblings, parents, children, or fields. They do that because they are my apprentices and because they believe the good news. **30** God will give those people many times **what they left behind** right now before he renews everything that he has made. **He will give them** houses, siblings, mothers, children, and fields. Also, people will hurt them. Further, God will enable them to live with him forever after he renews everything that he has made. **31** **At that time,** many people who are important right now will become unimportant. Many people who are unimportant right now will become important.”

32 Sometime later, Jesus and his apprentices were walking toward the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was walking ahead of them, which impressed them. However, the rest of the people with them were afraid. Then Jesus again spoke to his 12 representatives privately. He started to tell them about what people were going to do to him. **33** He said, “We are walking toward the city of Jerusalem! There, somebody will help the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law arrest me, the Son of Man. They will decide that I am guilty and that someone should kill me. They will bring me to the non-Jewish authorities. **34** Those people will make fun of me, spit on me **to insult me**, beat me, and execute me. Then, three days after I die, I will live again.”

35 After that, Zebedee’s sons, James and John, came to Jesus. They said, “Instructor, we want you to do for us what we are about to request.”

36 Jesus replied, “What do you want me to do for you?”

37 They answered, “Please promise us that, when you are very great, you will honor us by having one of us sit at your right side and the other one sit at your left side.”

38 Jesus replied, “You do not realize what you have actually requested. Are you willing to suffer as I will soon suffer? Are you willing for people to hurt you as they will soon hurt me?”

39 They told Jesus, “Yes, we are willing **to do those things**.”

Then Jesus told them, “You will certainly suffer as I will soon suffer. People will certainly hurt you as they will soon hurt me. **40** However, I am not the one who chooses whom to honor by having them sit at my right side or at my left side. Rather, God has already chosen who **will sit in those places**.”

41 When the ten other apprentices learned **what James and John had requested**, they started to be very upset with them. **42** So, Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He said to them, “You understand that the people whom the non-Jews allow to govern them dominate them. Further, important people among them control everyone else. **43** You must not behave like that. Rather, when one of you wants to be important, that person must serve the others. **44** Likewise, when one of you wants to be most important, that person must work for all the others. **45** **You should behave like that** because I, the Son of Man, am here to serve other people. I am not here so that other people will serve me. Indeed, I am going to die in order to free many people **from their sins**.”

46 Then, Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the city of Jericho. When they were leaving the city of Jericho along with a very large group of people, a man who could not see and who often asked others for money was sitting down next to the path. His name was Bartimaeus, and his father’s name was Timaeus. **47** He learned that Jesus from the town of Nazareth was there. So he started to shout, “Jesus, you who are a descendant of King David, please help me!”

48 Many people were scolding him to keep him quiet. However, he shouted even more loudly, “You who are a descendant of King David, please help me!”

49 Then, Jesus stopped walking. He told people, “Tell him to come over here!”

Those people spoke to **Bartimaeus,** the man who could not see. They said, “Do not worry! Jesus wants you to come to him. So, stand up **and go to him**!” **50** So Bartimaeus took off his outer garment and jumped up. Then, he hurried to Jesus.

51 Jesus asked him, “How would you like me to help you?”

Bartimaeus, the man who could not see, replied, “Teacher, I want to be able to see again!”

52 Jesus told him, “You can go on your way. Because you believed that I could heal you,
you are now well.” As soon as Jesus said that, Bartimaeus could see again. Then, he began to
walk with Jesus.

11 1 After that, Jesus and his apprentices continued to walk toward the city of Jerusalem,
and they were getting closer. They were near the Mount of Olives, just outside the villages of
Bethphage and Bethany. Jesus told two of his apprentices to go ahead of them. 2 He instructed
them, “Enter the village of Bethphage, which you see ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you
will see a young donkey that someone has tethered. It is an animal that no one has ever ridden.
Remove the tether from the young donkey and lead it to me here. 3 People might ask you,
‘What are you doing?’ In that case, tell them, ‘The Lord needs this young donkey. As soon as
he finishes using it, he will return it here.’”

4 So the two apprentices left for the village. They saw the young donkey standing on the
road. Someone had tethered it to the door of a house. They started to remove its tether.

5 Some people who were there asked the two apprentices, “Why are you removing the
tether from the young donkey?”

6 The two apprentices told those people what Jesus had instructed them to say. Then, those
people allowed the two apprentices to take the young donkey. 7 They led the young donkey to
Jesus. Then they spread their coats on the young donkey, and Jesus rode on it. 8 Then, to honor
Jesus, many people laid their coats down on the path in front of Jesus. Other people cut down
leafy plants that were growing in nearby farms and laid them down on the path too. 9 People
walked in front of Jesus and behind him. They were shouting,

> “Praise God!
> May God bless him who is here to represent the Lord!
> 10 The kingdom that our ancestor King David ruled is now here again! May God
> bless it!
> May everything in heaven praise God!”

11 Then Jesus went into the city of Jerusalem and he visited the temple area. He examined everything that was there. After that, because it was evening, he and his 12 representatives returned to the village of Bethany.

12 The following day, when Jesus and his apprentices were leaving the village of Bethany, Jesus became hungry. **13** He saw a fig tree further down the path. It had leaves, so he walked to it to pick some figs from it **to eat**. However, when he arrived at the fig tree, it had **no figs but** only leaves. That was because it was not yet the normal time of year when fig trees would produce ripe figs. **14** Jesus responded by saying to the fig tree, "No one will eat figs that they pick from you ever again." The apprentices listened **to him say that**.

15 Then Jesus and his apprentices arrived at the city of Jerusalem. Jesus again visited the temple area. Some people were selling and buying things there. He started to force them to leave. Other people were exchanging **regular** money **for special temple money**, and other people were selling small birds **for people to sacrifice**. Jesus flipped over their tables and chairs. **16** Also, he did not allow people to take items through the temple area. **17** Then Jesus instructed those people, "You know that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures, 'People should say that my temple is a place where all groups of people pray.' However, you have turned it into 'a hideout for thieves'!"

18 What Jesus taught impressed the large group of people. Because of that, when the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law learned **what Jesus had said and done**, they became afraid of him. So, they planned how they might have someone execute Jesus. **19** That evening, Jesus and his apprentices left the city **of Jerusalem and again spent the night in the village of Bethany**.

20 The next morning, Jesus and his apprentices walked past **the same fig tree that they had passed the previous morning**. The apprentices noticed that it had completely died. **21** Then Peter remembered **what Jesus had said to the fig tree**. He told Jesus, "Teacher, look! The fig tree that you cursed has died!"

22 Jesus replied by telling his apprentices, "You should trust God! **23** Suppose that you trusted that **God** would do what you said, and you were not unsure **that God would do it**. Then, you could tell the hill we are near to leave **this place** and fall into the ocean, and it would

happen. What I have said is true. **24** Because that is true, here is what I want to tell you. Trust that God will give you whatever you ask him for, and he will give it to you. **25** Further, suppose that when you are praying, you remember that someone has offended you. You should forgive them. That way, God your Father, who rules from heaven, will also forgive you when you sin against him. **26** [However, God your Father, who rules from heaven, will not forgive you when you sin against him as long as you do not forgive **other people**.]"

27 After that, Jesus and his apprentices again arrived at the city of Jerusalem. While Jesus was walking around in the temple area, some of the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders approached him. **28** They asked him, "In what way did someone authorize you to do what you have done? Who was it that authorized you to do those things?"

29 Jesus replied, "I, too, will ask you a question. When you answer it, I will answer your question about the way in which someone authorized me to do what I have done. **30** Did God authorize John the Baptizer from heaven to baptize people, or did people authorize **him to do that**? Answer that question!"

31 Then the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders told each other, "Suppose that we answer that **God authorized John** from heaven. Then, he will tell us that we should have listened to John. **32** On the other hand, we cannot answer that people **authorized John**." **They said that because they knew that** the large group of people believed that John had truly spoken for God, which made them afraid of how the large group of people would react.

33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know **who authorized John**."

Jesus responded, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you the way in which someone authorized me to do what I have done."

12 **1** Then Jesus started to tell a story to the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders. He said, "A certain man planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it **in order to protect it**. He made a stone tank **to collect the grape juice that they would press out of the grapes**. He also built a tower **for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard**. He

rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it, and he left to travel to a different country. **2** When it was time to harvest the grapes, the man told one of his servants to go to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. He wanted them to give him his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. **3** However, the people who were taking care of the vineyard grabbed the man's servant. They beat him up and told him to go away without giving him any of the grapes. **4** After that, the man told another servant to go to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. However, they beat this servant on the head and insulted him. **5** After that, the man told another servant to go to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. However, they killed this servant. After that, the man sent many other servants. However, they beat up some of them and killed the others.

6 Finally, the man still had only one other person with him, his son, whom he loved very much. So, the man told his son to go to them last of all. He thought that they would treat his son well and give him his share of the grapes. **7** However, when the people who were taking care of the vineyard saw the man's son arriving, they told each other, 'This man is the one who will inherit the vineyard. We should kill him, and then we can take the vineyard for ourselves.' **8** So, they grabbed the man's son and murdered him. Then, they dragged his corpse outside the vineyard.

9 I will tell you how the man who owned the vineyard will act. He will arrive at the vineyard, and he will kill the people who were taking care of the vineyard. Then, he will arrange for other people to take care of it. **10** What I have said fits with this scripture that you have read:

> 'The people who were constructing a building
> refused to use a certain stone.
> However, that stone is now
> the most important one in the building.
> **11** The Lord God did that,
> and we think it is amazing.'"

12 Then the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders realized that Jesus was accusing them when he told that story. Because of that, they wanted to

arrest him. However, they were afraid of how the large group of people would react. So, they left where he was without arresting him.

13 Then, the ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders told some of the Pharisees and some people who supported King Herod to go to Jesus. They instructed them to try to cause him to make a mistake in what he said. 14 When they arrived where Jesus was, they said to him, "Instructor, we realize that you say what is true. You do not pay attention to how important or powerful people are. So, you do not care about what other people think. Further, you truthfully instruct people about what God wants them to do. So, we want to ask you this: Does our law allow us to pay taxes to the Roman government, or does it not allow that? Should we pay the taxes, or should we not pay them?"

15 However, Jesus realized that they were only pretending to respect him. He replied, "You are trying to make me say something wrong. Hand me a Roman coin so I can examine it."

16 So, someone handed him a Roman coin. Then Jesus asked, "Whose picture and name are on this coin?"

They replied, "It is the leader of the Roman government's picture and name."

17 Then Jesus told them, "So then, give to the Roman government what belongs to it and give to God what belongs to him."

What Jesus said impressed the Pharisees and the people who supported King Herod.

18 After that, some Sadducees approached Jesus. They are a Jewish group that does not believe that God will make people who have died alive again. They asked Jesus,
19 "Instructor, Moses wrote for us in the Scriptures about what should happen when a man with a wife, but no children, dies. When that happens, the dead man's brother should marry the dead man's wife. When they have a child, they should consider it to be the child of the dead man. 20 So, consider this situation: there were seven brothers. One brother married a woman, but then he died before he had children. 21 Then, the second brother obeyed this law and married the woman. However, he too died before he had children. The same thing happened to the third brother. 22 In this way, each of the seven brothers married the woman but died before they had children. Finally, the woman died too. 23 So, of those brothers, whose wife will she

be when God makes people alive again? We ask because she got married to all seven brothers at different times."

24 Jesus replied, "You do not realize what the Scriptures mean or how powerful God is. Because of that, you believe what is wrong! 25 Here is what I mean: when God makes people alive again, they will not get married. Instead, they will be like angels who dwell in heaven and do not get married. 26 Now I will speak about whether God makes people who have died alive again. You have read in the section of the Scriptures that Moses wrote the story about how God appeared to Moses in a bush. In that story, God told Moses, 'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.'

27 It is living people who worship God, not dead people. So, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who all have died, must become alive again! So, you have believed many things that are wrong."

28 Then a man who taught the Jewish law approached Jesus. He heard Jesus and the Sadducees debating. He noticed that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer. So, he asked Jesus, "Which of the laws that God gave us is the most important?"

29 Jesus replied, "Here is the most important law:

'Listen, you people of Israel! The Lord God whom we worship is the only Lord. 30 You must love the Lord, the God whom we worship, with everything that you desire, everything that you do, everything that you think, and everything that you accomplish.'

31 Here is the next most important law: 'You must care for people you know as much as you care for yourselves.' No other laws are more important than these two laws!"

32 The teacher of the Jewish law replied, "That is a good answer, instructor. You are right when you say that God is the only God and that no other gods exist. 33 Further, we should love God with everything that we desire, everything that we think, and everything that we accomplish. Also, we should care for people we know as much as we care for ourselves. Doing those things is more important than burning or presenting any offering to God."

34 Jesus realized that the teacher of the Jewish law had responded in a wise way. So, Jesus told him, "You are close to participating in God's kingdom." After that, nobody was bold enough to ask him any more questions.

35 Then, while Jesus was instructing people in the temple area, he asked a question of his own. He said, “Does it make sense when the teachers of the Jewish law claim that the Messiah must be a descendant of King David? **36** **I ask that because** the Holy Spirit caused King David to write that the Lord God said to David’s Lord,

> ‘Rule with me
> while I defeat all of your enemies!’

37 So, King David called the Messiah ‘Lord.’ **However, people do not describe their descendants as their lords.** Therefore, how is it possible for the Messiah to be a descendant of King David?”

A very large group of people enjoyed listening to Jesus **say these things**.

38 While Jesus was instructing those people, he told them, “Make sure that you do not act like the teachers of the Jewish law. They like to put on long robes and walk around **so they look important**. They also like people to greet them **respectfully** in the open areas of towns. **39** They like to sit in the places for important people when they go to the Jewish meeting places or attend feasts. **40** They steal the property of women whose husbands have died. To make other people think that they are righteous, they pray for a long time. God will punish them very severely.”

41 Later, Jesus sat down **in the temple area** in front of the offering boxes that were there. He observed the large group of people drop coins into the boxes. Many wealthy people gave large amounts of money. **42** Then a woman whose husband had died and who did not have much money arrived. She dropped **into one of the offering boxes** two small copper coins. Those two coins together were worth only the least valuable Roman coin.

43-44 Then Jesus told his apprentices to come to him. He told them, “Most of these people have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. However, this woman, who does not have very much money, has given all the money that she had to pay for the things she needs. So, she has given to God more than what everyone else gave! What I have said is true.”

13 **1** After that, Jesus **and his apprentices** left the temple area. **As they were walking,** one of his apprentices said to him, “Instructor, pay attention to how marvelous these huge blocks of stone in the walls are and how beautiful these structures are!”

2 Jesus replied, “Look at these impressive structures! Enemies will completely destroy them. They will not leave anything standing.”

3 Later, Jesus and his apprentices sat down on top of the Mount of Olives in front of the temple. When no one else was with them, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Jesus,
4 “Please explain to us when what you have described will happen. Also, please explain to us how we can tell when everything that you have described is about to happen.”

5 Jesus started to reply, “Make sure that no one deceives you! 6 Many people will meet you and say that God has authorized them as he has authorized me. They will say that they are the Messiah. By doing that, they will deceive many people. 7 Whenever people tell you about wars that are happening and about wars that could happen, do not be afraid. Things like that have to happen. However, what I have said about the temple will not yet happen. 8 Further, groups of people will attack each other. Earthquakes will happen in many places. Many people will not have enough food to eat. Those events are like the first pains a pregnant woman feels when she is going to have a child. They are bad, but many more bad things will still happen after them.

9 Make sure that you are ready for what people will do to you. They will arrest you and accuse you in front of groups of important people. They will beat you in the Jewish meeting places. Because you are my apprentices, people will accuse you before local rulers and kings. That way, you will tell those rulers about me. 10 Indeed, my apprentices must preach the good news to all groups of people before what I have said about the temple will happen. 11 Whenever people arrest you and then accuse you, do not worry about how you will respond. In fact, you will not speak for yourselves. Instead, the Holy Spirit will speak through you. So, you should say whatever God reveals to you at that time. 12 During this time, men will have someone arrest their own brothers, and they will ask the judge to execute them. Fathers will do the same thing to their own children. Children will rebel against their parents and cause them to die.
13 Because you are my apprentices, many people will be hostile to you. However, if you persevere in being my apprentices while people harm you, God will rescue you.

14 At some point, you will realize that the detestable thing that destroys is where it does not belong.” (Anyone who is reading this should know what Jesus meant.) “When you realize that, those of you who are in the region of Judea should escape to the hilly areas nearby.

15 Those of you who are outside your homes should not go back into your homes to get
anything. 16 Those of you who are working in fields should not go back home to get your
coats. 17 When what I have described happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and
for nursing mothers! 18-19 People will suffer very severely when what I have described
happens. People have not suffered that severely since God created everything up to now, and
no one will ever suffer that severely again. So, ask God to keep these things from occurring
during the winter season, when it is difficult to travel. 20 Suppose that the Lord God were to
allow what I have described to continue. In that case, nobody would survive. However,
because of the people whom he has chosen to belong to him, God will not allow what I have
described to continue. 21-22 While those things are happening, there will be people who lie
when they claim to be the Messiah or to speak for God. They will do amazing miracles. They
will try to deceive the people whom God has chosen to belong to him, and they will almost
succeed in doing so. Therefore, when people tell you that the Messiah is here or there, do not
trust what they say. 23 Make sure that you are ready for what will happen. I have warned you
about this before it happens!

24 While what I have described is happening, once people suffer in the ways I have
described, God will cause the sun to become dark. The moon will not shine. 25 Stars will drop
down from the sky. God will disrupt the angels in heaven. 26 After that, people will see me,
the Son of Man, arriving by means of clouds. I will be very powerful and great. 27 After that, I
will tell the angels to collect the people whom I have chosen. They will collect them from
every place that exists.

28 Listen to this story about how fig trees grow. Whenever they begin to produce new
branches and leaves, you can tell that it is almost the summer season. 29 Similarly, whenever
you realize that what I have described is happening, you can tell that I will act very soon.
30 Most of the people who are alive right now will still be alive when what I have described
happens. What I have said is true. 31 Everything that God has created will eventually change
or disappear. However, what I have said will never change or disappear. 32 However, as for
when I will return to this world, no human being knows that. The angels who dwell in heaven
do not know that. Even I, the Son, do not know that. Only God my Father knows that. 33 So,
you do not know at what moment I will return to this world. Because of that, you need to make

sure that you are ready. You need to focus and pray. **34** Here is a story that illustrates what I mean. A man decided to travel to a different country. Before he left home, he authorized each of his servants to do something specific to manage the household. Then, he told the man who guarded the house to be ready for him to return. **35** So then, I am like the man who owned that house. You cannot know at what moment I will return to this world. It might be at sunset or at midnight. It might be very early in the morning or after sunrise. Because of that, you need to be ready at all times. **36** Otherwise, when I return to this world when you do not expect me, I might discover that you are not ready for me. **37** I am telling you that you need to be ready at all times. In fact, I am telling that to all people!"

14 **1** At that time, it was only two days until the Passover festival, which was the first day of the Celebration of Unleavened Bread. The ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law were planning a clever way to arrest Jesus and have people execute him. **2** They were planning something clever because they agreed that they would not act during the festival period. Otherwise, the people who were there in Jerusalem might riot.

3 Now Jesus was in the village of Bethany. He was in the home of Simon, who used to have a skin disease. While Jesus was feasting there, a woman arrived. She brought with her a stone jar that contained nard, a very valuable, fragrant ointment. She shattered the jar and poured the ointment on Jesus' head.

4 Some of the people there were very upset. They said to each other, "She wasted the fragrant ointment! **5** She could have sold this fragrant ointment for at least 300 coins! Then, she could have given that money to poor people." So, they rebuked her.

6 However, Jesus told those people, "Stop rebuking this woman. Do not bother her! What she did for me was right. **7** There will always be poor people with you, so you can help them whenever you want to. However, I will not always be with you. **8** This woman used what she possessed to do something for me. When she poured this ointment on me, she was preparing me ahead of time for when someone buries me. **9** In every place where my apprentices proclaim the good news, they will also tell what this woman just did. That way, people will remember her. What I have said is true."

10 Then Judas Iscariot visited the ruling priests to talk about helping them arrest Jesus. He was one of the 12 men whom Jesus had chosen to represent him. **11** When the ruling priests heard from Judas, they were very happy. They agreed to pay money to Judas **to help them arrest Jesus**. So, Judas tried to find a good time to help **the ruling priests** arrest Jesus.

12 Then it was the first day of the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, the time when people slaughter lambs for the Passover festival. Jesus' apprentices asked him, "Where should we go to set up the meal for the Passover celebration?"

13 So, Jesus told two of his apprentices **to prepare everything**. He instructed them, "Enter the city of Jerusalem. There you will encounter a certain man. He will be holding a jar with water in it. Go wherever he does. **14** When he goes into a house, tell the man who owns the house, 'Our instructor wants to eat the meal for the Passover celebration with us, his apprentices. He asks you to show us the room that is ready for him.' **15** He will take you to a large room that is upstairs. It will already have everything that we need for preparing and eating a meal. Then, set up the meal for us in that room."

16 So the two apprentices went away and entered the city of Jerusalem. Everything that Jesus had spoken about happened. Then they set up the meal for the Passover celebration.
17 When it was evening, Jesus arrived at that house with his 12 representatives.

18 Then, they began to feast. As they ate, Jesus told them, "One of you is going to help **my enemies** arrest me. This person is eating with me right now! What I have said is true."

19 The apprentices started to become sad. One after another they told Jesus, "I will not do that!"

20 Jesus responded, "One of you 12 men whom I have chosen to represent me **will do that**. It is one of you who is sharing food from this dish with me. **21** **I say that** because I, the Son of Man, will die. That is what you can read in the Scriptures about me. Nevertheless, how terrible it will be for the man who helps **my enemies** arrest me, the Son of Man. In fact, that man would be better off if he had never existed."

22 Then, as they ate, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread. He thanked God **for the loaf of bread**. He tore it into pieces and handed the pieces to the apprentices **to eat**. He said, "This **bread** is my body. Receive it."

23 Then Jesus picked up a cup **of wine**. He thanked God **for the wine**. Then, he handed **the cup of wine** to the apprentices. All of them drank wine from it.

24 Then Jesus told them, "This wine is my blood, which inaugurates the agreement **God is making with you**. My blood will flow from my body **when my enemies kill me**. That will help many people. **25** I will no longer drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again when we participate together in God's kingdom. What I have said is true." **26** After they sang a song praising God, Jesus and his apprentices walked to the Mount of Olives.

27 Then Jesus told them, "**God had Zechariah** write in the Scriptures,

> 'I will kill the one who is like a shepherd.
> Then, the people who are like sheep will flee.'

So, all of you will reject me! **28** However, once God has made me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the region of Galilee **and meet you there**."

29 Then Peter told Jesus, "Suppose that everyone else rejects you. Despite that, I will never **do that**!"

30 Jesus replied, "During this day, tonight, before a male chicken crows two times, you will say three times that you are not my apprentice! What I have said is true."

31 Peter replied strongly, "I will always say that I am your apprentice, even if I die with you because of that!" The rest **of the apprentices** said similar things.

32 After that, Jesus and his apprentices walked to a place that people call Gethsemane. He told the apprentices, "Stay here while I pray **to God**." **33** Jesus had Peter, James, and John go with him. Then, Jesus started to become very anxious and upset. **34** He told those three apprentices, "I am so sad that I feel like I am dying. Stay here and stay awake!"

35 After saying that, Jesus walked a little further. Then, he kneeled down to pray. He asked God to prevent him from experiencing what was about to happen, if there was any way to do so. 36 He prayed, “Abba (which means Father), you are able to do anything. Please prevent me from suffering terribly. However, please do what you want to do, not what I want you to do.”

37 Then he returned to the three apprentices. He discovered that they were asleep. He woke them up and told Peter, “Simon, it disappoints me that you were asleep. You could not stay awake for even a short time! 38 You men want to do what I say, but you are not strong enough. Stay awake and pray! That way, nothing can convince you to sin.”

39 Then Jesus walked a short distance away a second time. He prayed again what he had prayed previously. 40 Then he returned a second time to the three apprentices. He discovered that they, because they were so sleepy, had fallen asleep again. They did not know how to respond to him when he woke them up.

41 After Jesus walked away and prayed again, he returned a third time to the three apprentices. He woke them up and told them, “It disappoints me that you continue to sleep! You have slept enough. The time when I will suffer is beginning! Someone is about to help sinful people arrest me, the Son of Man. 42 Stand up! We are going to leave this place. The person who is helping my enemies arrest me has arrived!”

43 While Jesus was still talking to the three apprentices, Judas came. He was one of the 12 men whom Jesus had chosen to represent him. He brought with him a large group of people carrying swords and clubs. The ruling priests, the teachers of the Jewish law, and the other Jewish leaders had sent them to arrest Jesus.

44 Previously, Judas, who was helping Jesus’ enemies arrest him, told the group of people how they would know which man was Jesus. He instructed them, “The man you should arrest is the one whom I will greet affectionately. Guard him while you take him away.”

45 As soon as he arrived, Judas went to Jesus and said, “Teacher!” and he greeted Jesus affectionately. 46 Then the large group of people arrested Jesus.

47 One of the men who were there pulled his sword out of its sheath. He attacked a man who served the ruling priest, but he only cut off that man’s ear. 48 Jesus responded by saying to

the group of people, “You did not need to treat me like a dangerous bandit by arming yourselves with swords and clubs to arrest me. **49** Each day I was instructing people in the temple area, and you were there. You did not arrest me then! However, **as these things have happened**, what you can read in the Scriptures has come true.” **50** Then all **the apprentices** deserted Jesus and ran away. **51** Now there was a young man there. He was wearing only one thin garment. He had been walking around with Jesus. The people who arrested Jesus tried to arrest him too. **52** However, **he escaped by** slipping out of his garment, and he ran away naked.

53 The people who had arrested Jesus took him to **the house where** the ruling priest **lived**. All the ruling priests, the other Jewish leaders, and the teachers of the Jewish law assembled there. **54** Peter followed Jesus, but he stayed a safe distance away. **He went** into the area just outside **the house where** the ruling priest **lived**. He sat there with the servants near a fire to keep from getting cold.

55 The ruling priests and all **the rest of** the Jewish council tried to find something for which they could accuse Jesus. That way, they could have **the Roman authorities** execute him. However, they did not find **anything for which they could accuse him**. **56** In fact, many people said what was untrue about Jesus. However, these people did not agree about what Jesus had done.

57 Then, some other people got up to say what was untrue about Jesus. They declared, **58** “We heard him tell people that he would tear down this temple, which humans have built. Then he said that within three days he would construct another temple that God, not humans, would build.” **59** However, even these people did not agree about exactly what Jesus had said.

60 Then the ruling priest got up in front of everyone. He asked Jesus, “Are you going to reply? How do you respond to what these people have said about you?” **61** Despite that, Jesus kept quiet. Then the ruling priest asked him another question. He asked, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of **the God** whom we praise?”

62 Jesus replied, “That is who I am. You will see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully with God. **You will see me** arriving by means of clouds.”

63 When he heard that, the ruling priest was so upset that he ripped his clothes. He said, "We certainly do not need anyone else to say anything about him. 64 You have heard him insult God! What do you think we should do?" The whole Jewish council agreed that he was guilty and that someone should execute him because of what he had said.

65 Then some of them started to spit on Jesus to insult him. They covered his eyes and then struck him with their fists. They demanded, "Speak for God!" When the servants led Jesus away, they slapped him.

66 Meanwhile, Peter was down in the area just outside the ruling priest's house. A female servant, one of the servants who served the ruling priest, was there. 67 She noticed Peter, who was near a fire to keep from getting cold. She stared at him and declared, "I can tell that you were an apprentice of Jesus, that man from the town of Nazareth."

68 However, he told her that he was not Jesus' apprentice. He said, "I do not at all understand what you are talking about!"

Then Peter left the area just outside the house and walked to the place where people entered that area. 69 The female servant noticed him again, and she started to tell the people who were there, "This man belongs to Jesus' group."

70 However, Peter again said that he was not Jesus' apprentice. A little later, some people who were there told Peter, "You are from Galilee, where Jesus is from. So, you really must belong to Jesus' group."

71 Then Peter started to ask God to punish him if he was lying. He solemnly promised, "I have never met the man about whom you are speaking!"

72 As soon as he said that, a male chicken crowed for a second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had told him. He had said, "Before a male chicken crows two times, you will say three times that you are not my apprentice." Then Peter became very upset. He cried.

15 1 As soon as it was morning, the entire Jewish council, including the ruling priests, the other Jewish leaders, and the teachers of the Jewish law, planned what to do with Jesus. They

had their guards tie Jesus up and take him from there to Pilate, the Roman local ruler. They wanted Pilate to condemn him.

2 Pilate asked Jesus, “Do you claim to be king over the Jewish people?”

Jesus replied, “What you are calling me is right.”

3 Then the ruling priests claimed that Jesus had done many bad things. 4 After that, Pilate again spoke to Jesus. He said, “Listen to all the bad things they claim that you have done! Are you going to reply?”

5 However, Jesus did not respond anymore. How Jesus was acting greatly impressed Pilate.

6 It is important to know that during the festival period, Pilate usually set free one person who was in jail. He set free whomever the people who were in the city of Jerusalem chose. 7 It is also important to know that a man whose name was Barabbas was in jail with some other men who had rebelled against the Roman government. While they were rebelling, they had murdered some people. 8 The large group of people who were there approached Pilate. They started to ask him to set someone free, as he usually did for them.

9 Pilate replied, “Would you like for me to set free for you the man who claims to be king over you Jewish people?” 10 Pilate asked that question because he realized that the ruling priests had arrested Jesus and brought him to Pilate because they were jealous of Jesus.

11 However, the ruling priests convinced the large group of people to ask Pilate to free Barabbas rather than Jesus. 12 Then Pilate again replied, “So what do you want me to do with the person whom you claim is king over you Jewish people?”

13 The large group of people shouted, “Have your soldiers kill him by nailing him to a cross!”

14 Pilate replied, “But he has not done anything wrong!”

However, they shouted even louder, “Have your soldiers kill him by nailing him to a cross!”

15 Pilate decided to do what the large group of people wanted. So, he set Barabbas free. Then, he had his soldiers whip Jesus and take him away to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

16 After that, Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the area just outside **Pilate's palace**. That place was their headquarters. They summoned the rest of the soldiers who were there. **17** They clothed Jesus with a purple robe**, the kind that kings wear**. Also, they took some branches with thorns and laced them together to make a crown. They put it on Jesus' head. **18** Then the soldiers started **to mock him by** saying hello to him. They said, "Greetings, you who claim to be king over the Jewish people!" **19** They kept hitting Jesus' head with a staff. They kept spitting on Jesus **to insult him**. They bowed down in front of him **to pretend** to honor him. **20** After the soldiers made fun of Jesus, they pulled the purple robe off of him. They put his own clothes back on him. Then, some of the soldiers took him **from there to the place where** they were going to kill him by nailing him to a cross.

21 Meanwhile, a man was walking nearby. He had left the farm areas **and was entering the city of Jerusalem**. He was from the city of Cyrene, and his name was Simon. His sons were Alexander and Rufus. The soldiers forced this man to carry the cross for Jesus. **22** The soldiers took Jesus to a place **that people called** Golgotha. That name means "Skull Place." **23** The soldiers offered Jesus wine into which they had mixed a resin that people called "myrrh." However, Jesus refused to drink it. **24** After nailing Jesus to the cross, the soldiers split up his clothes by gambling for them. They did that to determine which piece of clothing each soldier would get.

25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they nailed Jesus to the cross. **26** The soldiers wrote on a sign why **they were executing Jesus**. Here is what they wrote: "The king over the Jewish people."

27 The soldiers also nailed two bandits to crosses near Jesus. They put one bandit on one side of Jesus and the other bandit on the other side of Jesus. **28** [**When those things happened**, what someone wrote in the Scriptures came true: "People considered him to be one of the people who do what is wrong."]

29 The people who walked past Jesus insulted him by shaking their heads **at him**. They said **to him**, “Ha! You said that you could tear down God’s temple and construct it again within three days. **30** So, rescue yourself by getting down from that cross!”

31 Similarly, the ruling priests and the teachers of the Jewish law made fun of Jesus among themselves. They declared, “He has rescued other people. However, he cannot rescue himself! **32** **He claims to be** the Messiah and the king over the people of Israel. So, he should get down now from that cross! That way, when we watch **him do that**, we will accept what he says.” The two men whom the soldiers had nailed to crosses near Jesus also insulted him.

33 When it was noon, it became dark in that whole area. **It stayed dark** until three o’clock in the afternoon. **34** At three o’clock in the afternoon, Jesus shouted, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” That means, “My God, my God, why did you abandon me?”

35 Some people who were there heard **what Jesus said and misunderstood it**. They declared, “Listen! He is speaking to the prophet Elijah!”

36 Then one man quickly went to soak a sponge in sour wine. He attached the sponge to the top of a staff. Then, he held it up to Jesus so that Jesus could suck **the sour wine** from it. Then the man said, “Do not do anything else for him! We should wait to find out whether Elijah appears to help him get down.” **37** After that, Jesus shouted loudly. Then he stopped breathing and he died. **38** And then the drape hanging **in front of the Most Holy Place** in the temple ripped in half; it tore from the top to the bottom.

39 There was a Roman officer standing there in front of Jesus. He observed how Jesus stopped breathing and died. He exclaimed, “This man really was God’s Son!” **40** **While all that was happening,** some women were there. They observed **what was happening** from farther away. These women included Salome, Mary from the town of Magdala, and Mary who was the mother of young James and Joses. **41** When Jesus was in the region of Galilee, these women had gone with him as his apprentices and had taken care of him. Additionally, many other women were there **observing what was happening**. They had walked to the city of Jerusalem with Jesus.

42-43 Now there was a man from the city of Arimathea whose name was Joseph. He was a member of the Jewish council, and people respected him. He too was eagerly expecting God's kingdom. When he arrived **in the city of Jerusalem**, it was Preparation Day, the day before the Jewish day of rest, and the evening had already begun. Because **it was Preparation Day**, this man went boldly to Pilate. He asked Pilate to allow him to take Jesus' body **to bury it**. **44** When Pilate heard that Jesus might already be dead, it surprised him. So, he summoned the Roman officer **who was in charge of executing Jesus**. Pilate asked the officer, "Is Jesus already dead?" **45** When the officer told Pilate **that Jesus was certainly dead**, Pilate **had his soldiers** give Jesus' body to Joseph. **46** So, Joseph purchased a fresh sheet of cloth. Then, he removed Jesus' body **from the cross**. He **prepared to bury it by** winding the fresh sheet of cloth around it. Then, Joseph put Jesus' body into a grave that Joseph's workers had made by digging into a rock cliff. After that, Joseph rolled a flat stone to block the entrance to the grave. **47** **While that was happening,** Mary from the town of Magdala and Mary who was the mother of Joses observed where Joseph had placed Jesus' body.

16 **1** When the Jewish day of rest was over, Salome, Mary from the town of Magdala, and Mary, who was the mother of James, purchased fragrant ointments. They planned to visit **Jesus' grave** and pour the ointments on his body **to finish burying him properly**. **2** At dawn on Sunday morning, the three women visited Jesus' tomb. **3** **As they were walking,** they asked each other, "Who will help us by rolling the flat stone to open the entrance to the grave?"

4 **When they arrived,** they looked **at the grave** and noticed that someone had already rolled the flat stone **to open the entrance to the grave**. And that flat stone was huge! **5** Then, the three women walked into the grave, where they saw a young man. He was wearing a white robe and was sitting down to their right. What they saw startled them!

6 The young man told them, "Do not let what you see startle you! **I know that** you are looking for the body of Jesus from the town of Nazareth. He was the one whom soldiers killed by nailing him to a cross. God has made him alive again! He is no longer in this grave. Look at where people placed his body. **7** Now depart to his apprentices and tell them, especially Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of them to the region of Galilee. **Tell them that** Jesus will meet them there, which is what Jesus already told them."

8 The three women were shaking because what had happened amazed them. So they left the grave and ran away. Because they felt afraid, they did not speak to anyone **about what had happened**.

9 [When Jesus lived again early on Sunday morning, Mary from the town of Magdala was the first person to see him. Jesus had forced seven demons out of her. **10** She approached Jesus' apprentices, who were grieving very much. She told them **what she had seen**. **11** So, the apprentices learned that Jesus was alive and that Mary had seen him. However, they did not accept what she said.

12 Sometime later, two of Jesus' apprentices were traveling to farm areas. They saw Jesus, although he looked different. **13** Then, the two apprentices went back **to Jerusalem**. They told the other apprentices what had happened, but the others did not accept what the two apprentices said.

14 Sometime later, Jesus revealed himself to his 11 representatives while they were eating. Because they had not accepted it when people told them that they had seen Jesus after God made him alive again, Jesus scolded them. He told them that they should not have stubbornly refused to accept what those people said.

15 Then he told them, "Visit every place and proclaim the good news to every person! **16** God will rescue all people who trust in me and who have someone baptize them. However, God will punish all people who do not trust in me. **17** I will enable those who trust in me to perform miracles. Specifically, they will represent me by forcing demons out **of people**. They will talk in languages that they have not learned. **18** They will be able to hold snakes and drink poison without becoming sick or dying. When they touch sick people, it will cure them."

19 After the Lord Jesus said that to his apprentices, God brought him up into heaven. There, Jesus sat down to rule with God **the Father**. **20** As for the apprentices, they left **Jerusalem** and proclaimed **the good news** in every place. The Lord **Jesus** helped them and enabled them to perform miracles. That way, people could see that the good news was true. May it be so!]

Luke

1 **1** Many people have already been writing about the things that happened among us.
2 They have been recording what the people who saw these things happen told us about them.
Those people were there from the time when everything first started happening, and they have
been sharing the story ever since. **3** I myself have carefully investigated everything that
happened from the very beginning. So I decided that I should also write an accurate account
for you. Your Excellency, Theophilus, **4** I want you to know that what people have told you
about Jesus is true.

5 When Herod was the ruler of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was
a descendant of Abijah, and so he took his turn serving in the temple with other priests who
were also descendants of Abijah. His wife was named Elizabeth. She was a descendant of
Aaron, and so she was also from the priestly line. **6** God considered that both of them were
righteous because they always obeyed everything that the Lord had commanded. **7** But they
did not have any children, because Elizabeth had been unable to bear children. And now she
and her husband were too old to have children.

8 The time came for Zechariah's group of priests to take its turn serving in Jerusalem. So
Zechariah was there working as a priest for God. **9** The priests chose Zechariah to go into the
Lord's temple and burn incense there. They chose him in their usual way, by casting lots to
determine whom God wanted to perform a particular task. **10** When it was time to burn the
incense, many people were praying in the courtyard outside the temple. **11** Just then, an angel
of the Lord came to Zechariah. He stood at the right side of the altar where he was burning
incense. **12** When Zechariah saw the angel, he became agitated and terrified. **13** But the angel
said to him, "There is no reason to be afraid of me, Zechariah. You have been praying, and God
is going to answer your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son for you. Give him
the name John. **14** You will be very happy, and many other people will also be happy when he
is born. **15** You and they will be happy because your son will be very influential for God. He
must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink. The Holy Spirit will begin to influence him

even before he is born. **16** Your son will persuade many of the Israelites to stop sinning and to start obeying the Lord their God again. **17** Your son will go in advance of the Lord and he will be powerful in his spirit like the prophet Elijah was. He will cause parents to love their children again. He will cause many people who do not obey God to want to obey him and to live wisely and righteously. He will do this so that the Lord's people will be ready for him when he comes."

18 Then Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure that the things you have said will really happen? I am very old, and my wife is also very old**, so it is difficult for me to believe that they will happen**."

19 Then the angel replied to him, "I am Gabriel! I stand in God's presence! God sent me to tell you this good news about what will happen to you. **20** Now listen! What I have told you will certainly happen at the time that God has decided. But since you did not believe my message, God will keep you from talking. You will not be able to speak until the day that your son is born!"

21 **While Zechariah and the angel were talking in the temple,** the people in the courtyard were waiting for Zechariah to come out. They wondered why he was staying in the temple for such a long time. **22** Then he came out of the temple, but he was not able to speak to them. Because he could not talk, he made motions with his hands to try to explain what had happened. This made the people conclude that he had seen a vision from God while he was in the temple.

23 When Zechariah finished the time he needed to work as a priest in the temple, he left Jerusalem and went back to his home.

24 Some time after this, his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant, and she did not go out in public for five months. She said to herself, **25** "The Lord has enabled me to become pregnant. In this way, he has shown compassion to me. Thanks to him, I no longer have to feel ashamed around other people."

26 When Elizabeth had been pregnant for six months, God sent the angel Gabriel to a town called Nazareth in the district of Galilee. **27** God sent him there to speak to a virgin whose name was Mary. **Her parents had promised that** she would marry a man named Joseph, who

was a descendant of King David. **28** The angel came to where Mary was and said to her,
"Hello, blessed one! You are very special to the Lord!" **29** But when he said this, she was
confused. She had to try to understand what this greeting could mean. **30** Then the angel said
to her, "God desires to bless you, Mary, so do not be afraid! **31** Now listen. You will become
pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. Give him the name Jesus. **32** He will be great, and
he will be the Son of God Most High. God the Lord will make him king over his people, just as
his ancestor David was. **33** He will always be the king over the people of Israel. He will rule
over them forever!"

34 Then Mary said to the angel, "But I am a virgin. So how can this happen?" **35** The
angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of God Most High will be like
a shadow falling on you. So the baby you give birth to will be holy. He will be the Son of God.
36 Also listen to this. Your relative Elizabeth is also pregnant, and she is going to have a son.
Because she is very old, people thought that she could not bear children. But she has been
pregnant now for almost six months. **37** So you see, God can do anything!" **38** Then Mary
said, "All right. I am willing to obey the Lord. God can make the things you have described
happen to me." Then the angel left her.

39 Very soon after that, Mary got ready and traveled as quickly as she could to the city
where Zechariah lived, which was in the highlands of Judea. **40** She entered Zechariah's house
and greeted Elizabeth, his wife. **41** As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary greet her, the baby inside
Elizabeth suddenly moved. Immediately the Holy Spirit inspired Elizabeth to speak. **42** She
exclaimed loudly to Mary, "God has blessed you more than he has blessed any other woman,
and he has blessed the baby you will bear! **43** I am not worthy of this, that you, the mother of
my Lord, should come to visit me! **44** I know all of this because as soon as I heard you greet
me, the baby in my womb started moving around because he was so excited! **45** You are
blessed because you believed that what the Lord told you would come true."

46 Then Mary praised God by saying:

"Oh, how I praise the Lord
47 and I feel very joyful about God,
the one who saves me!

48 I am happy because he was gracious to me, even though I was not very important.

Just imagine this—from now on, people living at all times in the future will say that God has blessed me.

49 They will say this because God, the Powerful and Holy One, has done great things for me.

50 He acts mercifully throughout all time periods to the people who revere him.

51 He has shown people that he is very powerful.

He has routed those who think proudly within themselves.

52 He has made rulers stop ruling,

but he has honored people who are lowly.

53 He has let people who were hungry eat good food until they were full,

but he has sent rich people away without giving them anything.

54-55 He has helped Israel, the people who serve him.

Long ago he promised our ancestors that he would be merciful to them.

He has kept that promise and has always acted mercifully toward Abraham and all who descended from him."

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. After that, she went back home.

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth to her child, she bore a son. **58** When her neighbors and relatives heard about how kind the Lord had been to her by giving her a son, they were very happy along with Elizabeth. **59** Eight days later, people gathered together for the ceremony to circumcise the baby **to show that he belonged to God**. **This was also the time to give the baby a name.** The people wanted to name the baby Zechariah because that was his father's name. **60** But his mother said, "No, **his name will not be Zechariah.** His name will be John!" **61** So they said to her, "But John is not the name of any of your relatives!" **62** Then they made motions with their hands to his father, asking him to indicate what name he wanted to give to his son. **63** So he signaled that they should give him a tablet to write on. **When they gave him one,** he wrote on it, "His name is John." This amazed all of the people who were there! **64** Immediately, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.

65 **When** the people who lived nearby **heard about these things, they** felt a deep reverence for

God. They told many other people about what had happened, and this news spread to people throughout the highlands of Judea. **66** Everyone who heard about these things kept thinking about them. They thought, "Certainly this child will grow up to be someone very special!" They thought this because they could see that the Lord was present in his life in a powerful way.

67 After the child's father, Zechariah, could speak again, the Holy Spirit inspired Zechariah and he spoke these words from God:

68 "Praise the Lord, the God whom we people of Israel worship,
because he has come to set us, his people, free.
69 He has sent someone who will powerfully save us,
someone who is descended from David, whom he chose to be king.
70 (Long ago God inspired his prophets to say that he would do these things.)
71 God is sending this deliverer to save us from our enemies,
and he will rescue us from the power of everyone who hates us.
72 God has done this because he is faithful to our ancestors and so he is keeping the holy promise that he made to them.
73 This is the promise that he solemnly swore to our ancestor Abraham about what he would do for us.
74 He promised that he would rescue us from the power of our enemies
so that we could serve him without being afraid of them.
75 As a result, we could live in the right way, as people who completely belong to him, for as long as we live."

76 Then Zechariah said to his baby son,

"And as for you, my child, you will be a prophet
of the Most High God.
You will begin your work before the Lord comes
so that you can prepare the people to be ready for him.
77 You will tell God's people that he wants to save them by forgiving their sins.
78 God wants to save us because he is compassionate and merciful.
That is why he is sending this Savior from heaven to help us.

79 This Savior will show the truth to those who do not know it, even to those who
do not know it at all. He will show us how to live in a way that pleases God."

80 Over time, Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby boy grew up and became spiritually strong. Then he went to live in a desolate region. He was still living there when he began to preach publicly to God's people, Israel.

2 1 Also during that time, Caesar Augustus, who ruled over the whole Roman Empire, commanded that every person living in his empire had to register his name in an official list of the people who lived there. 2 This was the first time that the Romans recorded the names of everyone living in their empire. They did this during the time when Quirinius was the governor of the province of Syria. 3 So everyone had to go to his family's hometown to register.
4-5 Joseph also traveled to his family's hometown, along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, they left the town of Nazareth in the region of Galilee and traveled to the region of Judea, to the town of Bethlehem, which is also known as the city of David. Joseph and Mary went there to be registered in the public record. 6-7 When they arrived in Bethlehem, there was no place for them to stay in a place where visitors usually stayed. So they had to stay in a place where animals slept overnight. While they were there the time came for Mary to give birth and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in wide strips of cloth and laid him down where the food was kept for the animals inside the barn.

8 There were some shepherds camping out in the open country near Bethlehem that night. They were there taking care of their sheep. 9 Suddenly they saw an angel from the Lord standing in front of them. A glorious light from the Lord shone all over them. They became very afraid. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, because I have come to tell you very good news! This news is for all people, and should make everyone rejoice! 11 They will rejoice because today, in Bethlehem, King David's hometown, the person was born who will save you from your sins! He is the Messiah, the Lord! 12 And here is a sign for you. If you go to Bethlehem, you will find a baby there wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a feeding place for animals."

13 Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven appeared with the other angel. They were all praising God by saying,

> 14 "In the highest heaven may all the angels praise God! And on the earth may all the people who please God be peaceful with God and each other!"

15 When the angels left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "We should go right now to Bethlehem and see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!" 16 So they went quickly, and when they had found the place where Mary and Joseph were staying, they saw the baby lying in a feeding place for animals. 17 After they had seen him, they told everyone what the Lord had revealed to them about this baby. 18 All the people who were listening thought that what the shepherds told them was amazing. 19 But Mary carefully remembered all of these things and thought about them continually. 20 The shepherds returned to the fields where their sheep were. They kept talking about how great God is and praising him for all of the things that they had heard and seen. Everything had been exactly as the angel had told them it would be.

21 On the eighth day after the baby was born, they circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name that the angel had told them to give him even before Mary had become pregnant with him.

22 Mary and Joseph waited the number of days that the law of Moses required for her to become ceremonially clean again after having a baby. Then they brought him to Jerusalem so that they could dedicate him to the Lord in the temple. 23 They did this to obey the law of the Lord, which says, "You must set apart for the Lord every male offspring who is the first to be born." 24 There they offered the sacrifice that the law of the Lord told the parents of a newborn son to offer, "two turtledoves or two young pigeons."

25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He did what was pleasing to God and obeyed God's laws. He was eagerly waiting for God to send the Messiah to encourage the people of Israel. The Holy Spirit was directing him. 26 The Holy Spirit had previously revealed to him that before he died, the Lord would send the Messiah and he would get to see him. 27 So the Holy Spirit led Simeon to go into the temple courtyard. He was there when Joseph and Mary brought in the baby Jesus so that they could perform the ceremony for

him that God had commanded in the law. **28** When Simeon saw Jesus, he picked him up in his arms and thanked God, and then he said,

> **29** "Lord, you have kept your promise to me, and now I am content for you to let me die.
>
> **30** Because I have seen the one whom you have sent to save people,
>
> **31** the one whom you have prepared for all people to see.
>
> **32** He will be like a light that will reveal your truth to the other nations. He will show how glorious your plan is for Israel, your people."

33 Jesus' father and mother marveled at what Simeon said about him. **34** Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Jesus' mother, Mary, "Note well what I say: God has determined that, because of this child, many people in Israel will reject God and many will submit themselves to God. He will be a sign from God that many people will oppose. **35** As for you, the cruel things that people will do to him will make you so sad that it will feel as if a sword is piercing through your very soul. But this is necessary so that he can reveal the secret thoughts of many people."

36 A prophetess named Anna was also there in the temple courtyard. She was very old. She was the daughter of Phanuel, who was from the tribe of Asher. As a young woman, she had been married for seven years, and then her husband had died. **37** After that, she had lived as a widow for 84 more years. It seemed as if she was always in the temple, worshiping God by fasting and praying, at all times of the night and day. **38** At that same time, Anna approached Joseph and Mary and the baby. Anna began thanking God for the baby. Afterwards, she kept speaking about Jesus to many other people who were also expecting God to send the Messiah who would set the people of Israel free.

39 After Joseph and Mary had finished doing everything that the law of the Lord required for parents of a first son, they returned to their own town, Nazareth, in the district of Galilee. **40** As the child grew up, he became strong and very wise, and God was present in his life.

41 Every year Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. **42** So when Jesus was 12 years old, they all traveled to Jerusalem together when it was time for the Passover festival. **43** When the days for celebrating the festival ended, Jesus' parents started to

return home, but their son, Jesus, stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know **that he was still there**. **44** They thought that he was with the other people who were traveling with them. But after walking for one day, they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. **45** When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. **46** Three days after **Mary and Joseph had left Jerusalem**, they found Jesus at the temple. He was sitting among the Jewish religious teachers. He was listening to them teach and he was asking them questions. **47** All the people who heard what he said were amazed at how much he understood and how well he answered **the questions that the teachers asked**. **48** When his parents saw him, they were very surprised. His mother said to him, "My son, you should not have done this to us. Listen to me! Your father and I have been very worried as we have been searching for you!" **49** He said to them, "I am surprised that you needed to search for me. I thought you would know that I needed to be at my Father's house**, learning about him**." **50** But they did not understand the meaning of what he said to them. **51** Then he returned with them to Nazareth, and he always obeyed them. His mother kept thinking deeply about all the things that had happened.

52 As the years passed, Jesus continued to become wiser, and he grew taller. God and people continued to approve of him more and more.

3 **1** **This next part of the history happened** when Tiberius Caesar had been ruling **the Roman Empire** for about fifteen years. At that time, Pontius Pilate was the governor of the province of Judea, Herod Antipas was ruling the district of Galilee, his brother Philip was ruling the regions of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanius was ruling the region of Abilene. **2** The high priests **at the temple in Jerusalem** were Annas and Caiaphas. During that time, God spoke to Zechariah's son John **while he was living** out in the desolate area. **3** John traveled all around the area near the Jordan River. He kept announcing **to the people who came to hear him**, "If you want God to forgive your sins, you must reject wrong ways of living. Then I will baptize you!" **4** **When John preached like this,** the words came true that the prophet Isaiah wrote on a scroll long ago:

> "In the desolate place, someone will be calling out **to the people**:
> 'Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!
> Make yourselves ready for when he comes!'

5 When an important person is going to arrive by a certain road, people fill in all the
ravines and level off all the steep places in it.
They make the road straight wherever it is crooked,
and they smooth out all the bumps. In the same way, God will make sure that there
will be people who are ready for the Messiah.
6 Then everyone will recognize God's way of saving people."

7 Large groups of people were coming out to the desolate place where John was so that he would baptize them. So John said to them, "You people are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! You think that if I baptize you, God will spare you when he punishes sinners. But I did not say that! **8** You need to do the things that show that you have truly rejected your previous sinful way of living! And do not even begin to say to yourselves, 'Certainly God will not punish us, because we are descendants of Abraham!' That does not impress God. Let me assure you, God could turn these stones into descendants of Abraham! **9** You are like fruit trees that do not produce good fruit. God is like a man who is positioning the head of his axe at the base of those trees, ready to chop them down and throw them into the fire. God is ready to punish you like that if you continue sinning." **10** Then several of the people in the crowd asked him, "What kinds of things, then, does God want us to do?" **11** He answered them, "If any of you has two shirts, you should give one of them to someone who does not have a shirt. If any of you has plenty of food, you should give some to those who do not have food." **12** Some tax collectors also came, wanting John to baptize them. They asked him, "Teacher, what does God want us to do?" **13** He said to them, "Do not collect more money from the people than the Roman government tells you to collect!" **14** There were also some men there who were soldiers. Even they asked him, "And what about us? What does God want us to do?" He said to them, "Do not force people to give you money by threatening to harm them or by falsely accusing them of doing something wrong. Be content with the amount of money that you earn as a soldier." **15** People had been waiting for a long time for the Messiah to come. But now they were getting very hopeful about John. They thought that he might be the Messiah. **16** But John said to all of them, "I am not the Messiah. He is coming, and he is far greater than I am. He is so great that I am not worthy even to be like the slave who would untie the straps of his sandals when he comes in the house! When I baptized you, I used only water. But when the Messiah comes, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, who will judge and purify you. **17** The Messiah is ready to do this, just like a farmer who has his winnowing fork

ready to use. A farmer separates all the good grain from the useless chaff. He stores the grain safely in his barn, but he burns the chaff until it is all gone. **That represents how the Messiah will gather up the people who are pleasing to God, and he will punish the people who are displeasing to God.**" **18** In many different ways like this, John urged the people **to stop sinning and to submit themselves to God**, as he kept telling them the good news **from God**. **19** John even rebuked King Herod for all of the many evil things that Herod had done. But when John rebuked Herod for marrying his brother's wife, Herodias, while his brother was still alive, **20** Herod did another evil thing. He had his soldiers put John in prison. **21** But before Herod did that, while John was still baptizing many people, John also baptized Jesus. Afterwards, while Jesus was praying, the sky opened. **22** Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came down and landed on Jesus. Then God spoke **to Jesus** from heaven. He said, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you!" **23** At that time Jesus began his work for God. He was about 30 years old. This is Jesus' lineage: People considered Jesus to be the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Heli. **24** Heli was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. Levi was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Jannai. Jannai was the son of Joseph. **25** Joseph was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Amos. Amos was the son of Nahum. Nahum was the son of Esli. Esli was the son of Naggai. **26** Naggai was the son of Maath. Maath was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Semein. Semein was the son of Josech. Josech was the son of Joda. **27** Joda was the son of Joanan. Joanan was the son of Rhesa. Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the son of Neri. **28** Neri was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Addi. Addi was the son of Cosam. Cosam was the son of Elmadam. Elmadam was the son of Er. **29** Er was the son of Joshua. Joshua was the son of Eliezer. Eliezer was the son of Jorim. Jorim was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. **30** Levi was the son of Simeon. Simeon was the son of Judah. Judah was the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Jonam. Jonam was the son of Eliakim. **31** Eliakim was the son of Melea. Melea was the son of Menna. Menna was the son of Mattatha. Mattatha was the son of Nathan. Nathan was the son of David. **32** David was the son of Jesse. Jesse was the son of Obed. Obed was the son of Boaz. Boaz was the son of Salmon. Salmon was the son of Nahshon. **33** Nahshon was the son of Amminadab. Amminadab was the son of Admin. Admin was the son of Arni. Arni was the son of Hezron. Hezron was the son of Perez. Perez was the son of Judah. **34** Judah was the son of Jacob. Jacob was the son of Isaac. Isaac was the son of

Abraham. Abraham was the son of Terah. Terah was the son of Nahor. 35 Nahor was the son of Serug. Serug was the son of Reu. Reu was the son of Peleg. Peleg was the son of Eber. Eber was the son of Shelah. 36 Shelah was the son of Cainan. Cainan was the son of Arphaxad. Arphaxad was the son of Shem. Shem was the son of Noah. Noah was the son of Lamech. 37 Lamech was the son of Methuselah. Methuselah was the son of Enoch. Enoch was the son of Jared. Jared was the son of Mahalalel. Mahalalel was the son of Cainan. 38 Cainan was the son of Enos. Enos was the son of Seth. Seth was the son of Adam. Adam came from God.

4 1 After John baptized him, Jesus came back out of the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit was fully empowering him. Then the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness. 2 Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. While he was there, the devil kept tempting him. During that entire time, Jesus did not eat anything. So when the 40 days were over, he was very hungry. 3 Then the devil said to Jesus, "If you really are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread **for you to eat**!" 4 Jesus replied, "**No, I will not do that, because** the Scriptures say, 'People need more than just food in order to live.'" 5 Then the devil took Jesus up **to the top of a high mountain** and showed him all the nations of the world in an instant. 6 Then the devil said to Jesus, "I will make you the ruler over all of these nations and you will possess all of their wealth. I can do this because God has permitted me to control all of them, and so I can give them to whomever I wish. 7 All you have to do is bow down and worship me. Then I will let you rule them all!" 8 But Jesus replied, "**No, I will not worship you, because** the Scriptures say, 'You must only worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you may serve!'"

9 Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem. He set him on the highest part of the temple and said to him, "If you really are the Son of God, jump down from here. 10 You will not be hurt, because the Scriptures say,

> 11 'God will command his angels to protect you.' And the Scriptures also say,
> 'The angels will hold you up in their hands when you are falling, so that you will
> 12 not get hurt.'" But Jesus replied, "**No, I will not do that, because** the Scriptures also say: 'Do not test the Lord your God'."

13 Then, after the devil had finished trying to tempt Jesus in all of these ways, the devil left Jesus to wait until another time when he could try to tempt Jesus again.

14 After this, Jesus left the desolate area and returned to the district of Galilee. The Holy Spirit was empowering him. Throughout that whole region, people heard about Jesus and told others about him. 15 He taught people in their Jewish meeting places. As a result, all of the people praised him.

16 Then Jesus went to Nazareth, the town where he had grown up. As he usually did on the Jewish day of rest, he went to the Jewish meeting place. At the appropriate time, he stood up to read something aloud from the Scriptures. 17 Jesus wanted to read some of the words that the prophet Isaiah had spoken long ago. So he asked for the scroll that contained these words, and a synagogue attendant handed it to him. Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place from which he wanted to read. He read these words:

> 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is empowering me,
> because he has specially appointed me to declare God's good news to people who are poor.
> He has sent me to declare to people who are in prison that they will go free,
> and to tell those who are blind that they will see again.
> He has sent me to release people whom others are oppressing,
> 19 and to announce that now is the time when the Lord will act favorably toward people."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and he sat down to teach the people. Everyone in the Jewish meeting place was looking intently at him. 21 He began to teach them by saying, "I have made this Scripture passage come true right now, as you heard me read it." 22 Everyone there approved of him and they were amazed at the wonderful things that he said. Many of them said to each other, "It is surprising that he can speak like this! This man is only Joseph's son!" 23 He said to them, "Surely some of you will quote to me the proverb that says, '"Doctor, heal yourself!" What you will mean by it is, People told us that you did miracles in the town of Capernaum. If you want us to believe that you are a prophet, then do the same kind of miracles here in your hometown!'" 24 Then he said, "It is certainly true that

the people in a prophet's own hometown do not accept that he is a prophet. **25** Think about this: There were many widows in Israel during the time when the prophet Elijah lived. At that time there was no rain for three and a half years. This caused a great famine throughout the whole country. **26** And yet God did not send Elijah to help any of the widows in Israel. Instead, God sent him to the town of Zarephath near the city of Sidon, to help a **non-Israelite** widow there. **27** There were also many lepers in Israel during the time when the prophet Elisha lived. But Elisha did not heal any of them. Instead, he healed only Naaman, **a non-Israelite man** from the country of Syria." **28** When all the people in the Jewish meeting place heard him say those things, they became very angry. **29** So they stood up, grabbed Jesus, and dragged him out of the city. They took him to the edge of the cliff outside of their city in order to throw him off of the cliff and kill him. **30** But Jesus simply walked through the crowd and went away.

31 From there Jesus went down to Capernaum, a city in the district of Galilee. On each Jewish day of rest, he taught the people **in the Jewish meeting place there**. **32** The things that Jesus taught the people amazed them, because he spoke as someone who knew what he was talking about. **33** Now in that Jewish meeting place there was a man whom an evil spirit controlled. He shouted very loudly, **34** "Aah! Jesus, from Nazareth! What do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! You are the Holy One from God!" **35** But Jesus spoke sternly to the evil spirit. He said, "Be quiet and come out of him!" The evil spirit threw the man down on the ground in the middle of the people. But then he came out of the man, without harming him. **36** All of the people **in the Jewish meeting place** were amazed. Many of them said to each other, "We have never seen anything like this! His words are so powerful! He commands the evil spirits as if they must obey him, and **when he commands them,** they come out **of people**!" **37** In every place throughout the surrounding region, people kept talking about what Jesus had done.

38 Then Jesus left the Jewish meeting place and went to the house of a man named Simon. His mother-in-law was there. She was sick and had a high fever. The people there asked Jesus to heal her. **39** So Jesus went over to where she was and stood next to her. He commanded the fever to leave her, and it did! She immediately got up and served them some food.

40 When the sun was setting**, which ended the Jewish day of rest**, many people whose friends or relatives were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus. He put his hands on

each one of them and healed them. 41 As Jesus put his hands on the sick people, evil spirits also came out from many of them. As the evil spirits came out, they shouted to Jesus, "You are the Son of God!" But he commanded those evil spirits not to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

42 Early the next morning, Jesus went out to an uninhabited place. Crowds of people went looking for him. When they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But Jesus said to them, "I must also tell people in other cities the good news that they can have God rule their lives, because that is what God sent me here to do." 44 So he went on preaching in the Jewish meeting places throughout the province of Judea.

5 1 One day while many people were crowding around Jesus and listening to him teach God's message, he was standing next to Lake Gennesaret. 2 He saw two fishing boats there at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left the boats and were washing their fishing nets. 3 Jesus stepped into one of the two boats, the one that belonged to Simon. Jesus asked him to move the boat out a short distance away from the shore. Then Jesus sat down in the boat and continued to teach the crowds from there. 4 After he finished teaching them, he said to Simon, "Take the boat out to deeper water and let your nets down into the water to catch some fish." 5 Simon replied, "Master, we worked hard through the whole night and yet we did not catch any fish. But I will let down the nets again because you told me to." 6 So Simon and his crew let down their nets and they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 They motioned to their fishing partners in the other boat to come and help them. So they came and filled both boats so full with fish that the boats began to sink. 8 Seeing this, Simon Peter bowed down before Jesus and said, "Please leave me, because I am a sinful man, Lord." 9 He said this because he marveled at the huge number of fish that they had caught. All the men who were with him also marveled. 10 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners, were just as amazed. But Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid! Until now you gathered in fish, but from now on you will gather in people to become my disciples." 11 So after the men brought the boats to the shore, they left their fishing business and everything else and went with Jesus.

12 Jesus went to one of the towns nearby. There was a man there who was covered with a skin disease. When he saw Jesus, he bowed down to the ground in front of him. He pleaded with him, “Lord, **please heal me!** I know that you are able to heal me if you are willing!” **13** Then Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. He said, “I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!” Immediately the man was healed. He no longer had leprosy! **14** Then Jesus told him, “Do not tell anyone that I healed you. First, go and show yourself to a priest so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have leprosy. Bring the sacrifice that Moses commanded you to offer to become ceremonially clean again.” **15** But instead even more people heard **about how Jesus had healed the man**. As a result, large crowds came to hear **Jesus teach** and to have him heal them from their sicknesses. **16** But he would often go away from them to isolated areas and pray.

17 One day when Jesus was teaching, some men from the Pharisee sect and some expert teachers of the Jewish law were sitting nearby. They had come from many villages in the district of Galilee and also from Jerusalem and other cities in the province of Judea. At that same time, the Lord was giving Jesus the power to heal people. **18** While Jesus was there, several men brought him a man who was paralyzed**. They were carrying the man** on a sleeping pad and trying to bring him into the house to lay him down in front of Jesus. **19** But because there was such a large crowd of people in the house, they were not able to bring him in. So they went up **the outside steps** onto the flat roof. **They removed some of the tiles from the roof to make an opening.** Then they lowered the man on his sleeping pad through the opening into the middle **of the crowd**. He came down right in front of Jesus. **20** When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the man, he said to him, “Friend, I forgive your sins!” **21** The teachers of the law and the Pharisees began to think to themselves, “This man insults God by saying that! Nobody except God can forgive sins!” **22** Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, “You should not question what I said within yourselves! **23** Here is something I want you to think carefully about. Which is easier to say, ‘I forgive your sins,’ or, ‘Get up and walk’? **You might think that saying ‘I forgive your sins’ is easier because it does not require any visible proof.** **24** But I want you to know that God has given me, the Son of Man, authority to forgive people on earth their sins. **To demonstrate that, I will also tell this man to get up.**” Then he said to the man who was paralyzed, “To you I say, get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!” **25** Immediately **the man was healed!** He got up in front of them all. He picked up the

sleeping pad on which he had been lying, and he went home, praising God. **26** All the people there were astonished! They praised God and were completely amazed **at what they had seen Jesus do**. They kept saying, "We have seen wonderful things today!"

27 Then Jesus left that place and saw a man named Levi who collected taxes **for the Roman government**. He was sitting in the booth **where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required**. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple!" **28** So Levi left his work and went with Jesus.

29 Later on Levi prepared a big feast in his own house for Jesus **and his disciples**. There was a large group of tax collectors and others eating together with them. **30** Then some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect, including some of them who taught Jewish laws, complained to Jesus' disciples. They said, "You should not be having a banquet with tax collectors and **other** sinners." **31** Then Jesus said to them, "People who are well do not need a doctor. People who are sick need a doctor. **32** Similarly, I did not come from heaven to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. On the contrary, I came to invite those who know that they are sinners to turn from their sinful behavior and come to me."

33 Those Jewish leaders responded to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptizer often abstain from food and pray. The disciples of the Pharisees do that too. But your disciples keep on eating and drinking! Why do they not fast like the others?" **34** Jesus answered, "No one tells the friends of the bridegroom to fast while the wedding celebration is still going on! **35** But some day the bridegroom will no longer be with his friends. Then, at that time, they will abstain from food."

36 Then Jesus gave other examples to explain what he meant. He said, "People never tear a piece of cloth from a new garment and attach it to an old garment to mend it. If they did that, they would ruin the new garment by tearing it, and the piece of cloth from the new garment would not match the old garment. **37** And no one puts newly squeezed wine into old skin bags **to store it**. If anyone did that, the skin bags would tear open **because they would not stretch when the new wine fermented and expanded**. Then the skin bags would become useless, and the wine **would also become useless because it** would spill out. **38** On the contrary, new wine must be put into new skin bags.

39 Those who have only drunk old wine do not want to try new wine, because they think,
‘The old wine is good enough!’”

6 1 One Sabbath day, as Jesus and his disciples were walking through some grain fields, the
disciples picked some heads of grain. They rubbed them in their hands to separate the grain
from the husks. Then they ate the grain. 2 Some Pharisees were watching this. They said to
them, “You should not be doing work like that! Our law forbids us to do work on the Sabbath
day!” 3 Jesus replied to the Pharisees, “Consider what the Scriptures say about what David did
when he and the men who were with him were hungry. 4 As you know, David entered the
tabernacle and asked for some food. The priest gave him the bread that had been on display
before God. David ate some, and he also gave some to the men who were with him, even
though the law said they could not do that. Only priests could eat that bread.” 5 Jesus also said
to them, “I, the Son of Man, have the authority to determine what is right for people to do on
the Sabbath!”

6 On another Sabbath day Jesus went to the synagogue and taught the people. A man was
there who could not move his right hand. 7 Some teachers of the Jewish laws and some
Pharisees were there. They were watching Jesus closely. They wanted to see whether he would
heal the man. If he did, then they would accuse him of disobeying their laws about not working
on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to the man with the
withered hand, “Come and stand here in front of everyone!” So the man got up and stood there.
9 Then Jesus said to them, “I want to ask you a question. Do the laws that God gave Moses
command people to do good on the Sabbath, or to do harm? Do they command people to save
a life on the Sabbath, or to destroy it?” 10 No one answered him, so he looked around at them
all and then said to the man, “Stretch out your withered hand!” The man did that, and his hand
became completely well again! 11 But the religious leaders were very angry, and they
discussed with one another about what they could do to get rid of Jesus.

12 Around that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray. He prayed to God all night there.
13 The next day he called all his disciples to come to him. From among them he chose 12 men
and made them his representatives. 14 These are their names: Simon, to whom Jesus gave the
new name Peter; Andrew, Peter’s brother; James and his brother, John; Philip; Bartholomew;

15 Matthew, whose other name was Levi; Thomas; another man named James whose father was named Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; 16 Judas, the son of a different man named James; and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

17 Jesus came down from the hills with his disciples and stood on a level area. There was a great crowd of his disciples there. There was also a large group of people who had come from Jerusalem and from many other places in the region of Judea, and from the coastal areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. 18 They came to hear Jesus teach them and heal them from their diseases. He also healed those whom evil spirits had troubled. 19 Everyone in the crowd tried to touch him, because he was healing everyone by his power. 20 Then he looked at his disciples and said, "It is very good for you who are poor, because God is ruling you. 21 It is very good for you who are hungry now, because God will give you everything you need.

It is very good for you who are grieving now, because God will someday make you laugh with joy.

22 It is very good when other people hate you, when they reject you and insult you and say that you are bad because you follow me, the Son of Man. 23 When that happens, rejoice! Jump up and down because you are so happy! Keep in mind that God is going to give you a great reward in heaven! Do not forget that the ancestors of the people who are treating you this way did similar things to God's prophets long ago.

24 But how sad it is for you who are rich. You have already received all the comfort you are going to get from your riches. 25 How sad it is for you who can stuff yourselves with food now. Later you will go hungry.

Woe to the ones who are laughing now. Later you will be very unhappy. 26 How sad it is for you when everyone says good things about you. In the same way, their ancestors used to say good things about people who falsely claimed to be God's prophets.

27 But I say this to each of you who are listening to what I say: Love your enemies, not only your friends! Do good things for those who hate you! 28 Ask God to bless those who curse you! Pray for those who treat you badly! 29 If someone insults you by striking you on one of your cheeks, turn your face so that he can strike the other cheek also. If someone wants

to take away your coat, let him also have your shirt. **30** Give something to everyone who asks you. If someone takes things that belong to you, do not make him return them. **31** In whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way that you should act toward them.

32 If you love **only** those who love you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even sinners love those who love them. **33** Do not expect God to reward you because you do good things for people who do good things for you. After all, even sinners do that. **34** If you lend **money or property** only to those who will give it back to you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even sinners lend to other sinners who will give everything back to them. **35** Instead, love your enemies! Do good things for them! Lend to them, and do not expect them to pay anything back! Then God will give you a great reward. And you will be children of God the Most High, since God is kind even to people who are unthankful and wicked. **36** So you should act mercifully toward other people, just as God, your Father, acts mercifully toward people.

37 Do not harshly criticize **other people**. Then God will not harshly criticize you. Do not condemn **other people**. Then God will not condemn you. Forgive **others for the wrong things they have done to you**. Then God will forgive you. **38** Give **to others**. Then God will give to you. It will be as if he is trying to give you as much grain as possible in a container you have. He will press the grain down. He will shake it together. He will keep filling the container until it overflows. So when you give to others, it should be as if you are using a big scoop, because God will use the same size scoop to give to you."

39 He also gave his disciples this example: "A blind person should not try to lead another blind person **down the road**. If he did, they both would fall into the ditch **on the side of the road**! **40** A disciple is not greater than his teacher. But once the teacher has finished training him, he will become like his teacher.

41 **None of you should be concerned about the small faults of another person. You should be concerned about your own serious faults.** Otherwise, that would be like noticing a speck in the eye of that person while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. **42** You should not tell another believer, 'Friend, let me help you correct your faults,' when you have not dealt with your own faults yet. If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first **stop committing your own sins. That will be like** removing a large plank from your own eye. Then, as a result,

you will have the spiritual insight you need to help others get rid of the **smaller faults that are like** little specks in their eyes.

43 Everyone knows that healthy trees do not produce bad fruit and unhealthy trees do not produce good fruit. **44** You can tell what a person is like inside by the things that they do. **Then you know what to expect from them. You would not look for kindness or good advice from someone who does bad things.** That would be like looking for figs on a thornbush or looking for grapes on a bramble vine. **45** Good people do good things because they think good things. Evil people do evil things because they think evil things. This is because people speak and act based on what they are thinking about."

46 **Jesus said to the people,** "Why do you call me 'Lord' when you do not obey what I tell you to do? **47** Let me tell you what people are like who come to me, hear my teachings, and obey them. **48** Such people are like a person who dug deep into the ground to prepare to build his house. He made sure to build the foundation **for the house** on solid rock. Then there was a flood. A torrent of water was beating against that house. But it could not destroy it, because the person had built the house on a solid foundation. **49** But some people who hear my teachings do not obey them. They are like a person who built a house on top of the ground without digging a foundation first. When the floodwaters came, it collapsed immediately. The waters destroyed that house completely."

7 **1** After Jesus finished saying all these things to the people who were listening, he went to the town of Capernaum. **2** In that town there was a centurion in the Roman army who had a slave who was dear to him. This slave was so sick that he was about to die. **3** When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus to ask him to come and heal his slave. **4** When they came to Jesus, they earnestly asked him **to help the centurion's slave**. They said, "He deserves to have you do this for him, **5** because he loves our people and he built our synagogue for us." **6** So Jesus went with them **to the officer's house**. When he was almost there, the officer sent some friends to give this message to Jesus: "Lord, do not go to the trouble **of coming here**, since I am not worthy to have you come into my house. **7** That is why I did not feel that I was worthy to come to you in person. I knew that you could heal my dear slave just by speaking **a command**. **8** **I know that you can do this** because I myself am a

man who must obey the orders of my superiors. I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, 'Go!' he goes. When I say to another one, 'Come!' he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!' he does it." **9** When Jesus heard what the officer had said, he was amazed at him. Then he turned to the crowd that was with him and said, "Let me tell you, I have not met any Israelite who trusts me as much as this Gentile does!" **10** When the friends who had come from the centurion returned to his house, they found that the slave was in good health again.

11 Soon after that Jesus traveled to the town of Nain. His disciples and a large crowd went with him. **12** As Jesus came near to the town gate, he saw a large crowd coming out of the town. A man had just died, and they were carrying him out to bury him. His mother was in the crowd. She was a widow, and he had been her only son. **He had taken care of her while he was alive.** **13** When Jesus saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not cry!" **14** Then he came close **to them** and touched the stretcher **on which the body was lying**. The men carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" **15** Then the man who had died sat up and began to talk! And Jesus led him back to his mother. **16** Everyone there was awestruck. They praised God and said **to each other**, "A great prophet has come among us!" and "God has come to care for his people!" **17** Then this news about **what** Jesus **had done** spread throughout the region of Judea and all the other areas nearby.

18-19 The disciples of John the Baptizer told him about all these things. So John called for two of his disciples and told them to go to the Lord and ask him: "Are you the one whom God promised would come, or should we be expecting someone else?" **20** When those two men came to Jesus, they told him, "John the Baptizer sent us to ask you, 'Are you the one whom God promised would come? Or should we wait for someone else?'" **21** At that same time Jesus was healing many people from sicknesses and serious diseases, and he was delivering them from evil spirits. He also gave many blind people the ability to see again. **22** So he answered those two men, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. People who were blind are now seeing. People who were lame are now walking. People who had skin diseases no longer have them. People who were deaf can now hear. People who were dead have come back to life. I am proclaiming good news to poor people." **23** **And also tell him,** "God will bless anyone who **sees what I do and hears what I teach and** continues to believe in me."

24 When the men whom John had sent left, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said, “What did you go into the wilderness to see? A thin stalk of a plant shaken by the wind? **25** But what did you go out to see? A man wearing fancy clothing? Listen, those who wear splendid clothes and who have the best of everything live in kings’ palaces. **26** Then what did you go out there to see? A prophet? Yes, **that is who John is**! But I tell you that John is more significant than an ordinary prophet. **27** He is the one about whom the prophet wrote long ago: ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare people for your coming.’

28 I tell you that of all the people who have ever lived, there is no one greater than John. Yet the most insignificant people whose lives God is ruling are greater than John.”

29 When all the people whom John had baptized heard what Jesus said—including the tax collectors—they agreed that God had done the right thing **by sending John**. **30** But the Pharisees and the experts in the Jewish law, whom John had not baptized, rejected God’s will for them.

31 **Then Jesus also said, “I will tell you** what you people living in this time period are like. **32** You are like children playing games in an open area. They call out to each other, saying, ‘We played happy music for you on the flute, but you did not dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you did not cry!’ **33** Similarly, when John came to you and did not eat ordinary food or drink wine, you **rejected him and** said, ‘A demon is controlling him!’ **34** But when the Son of Man came to you and he ate **ordinary food** and drank **wine as others do**, then you **rejected him and** said, ‘Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he associates with tax collectors and other sinners!’ **35** But those who are wise themselves recognize that what John and I do is also wise.”

36 One day a certain Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went to the man’s house and reclined at a table to eat. **37** There was also a woman in that city who had a bad reputation. When she heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee’s house, **she went there,** bringing a stone jar that contained perfume. **38** **As Jesus was reclining to eat, the woman stood behind him at his feet.** She was crying, and her tears fell on Jesus’ feet. She continually wiped his feet with her hair. She kept kissing them and anointing them with the

perfume. **39** When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what the woman was doing, he thought, "If this man really were a prophet, he would have known who this woman is who is touching him. He would have known what kind of person she is, that she is a sinner." **40** In response, Jesus said to him, "Simon, there is something I want to tell you." He replied, "Teacher, what is it?" **41** Jesus told him this story: "Two people owed money to a man who had a business lending money. One of these people owed him 500 silver coins. The other one owed him 50 silver coins. **42** Neither of them was able to pay back what he owed, so the man very kindly said that they both did not have to pay back anything. So, which of those two men will love that man more?" **43** Simon replied, "I assume that the one who had owed him the larger amount will love him more." Jesus said to him, "You are correct." **44** Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Think about what this woman has done! When I entered your house, you did not do what hosts usually do to welcome their guests. You did not give me any water to wash my feet. But this woman has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair! **45** You did not greet me with a kiss. But from the moment I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet! **46** You did not anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with fragrant perfume. **47** So I tell you that God has forgiven her many sins, and that is why she loves me very much. But a person who thinks that God has only had to forgive him for a few sins will love me only a little bit." **48** Then Jesus said to the woman, "I have forgiven your sins." **49** Then those who were eating with him said among themselves, "Who is this man who says that he can even forgive sins?" **50** But Jesus said to the woman, "Because you have believed in me, God has saved you. May God give you peace as you go!"

8 **1** After that, Jesus and his 12 representatives traveled around through various cities and villages. As they went, Jesus preached to people, telling them the good news that they could have God rule their lives. **2** Also traveling with them were several women whom he had delivered from evil spirits and healed from sicknesses. These included Mary from the village of Magdala. Jesus had forced seven evil spirits to leave her. **3** Another of these women was Joanna. She was the wife of Chuza, who was a manager for King Herod. These women also included Susanna and many others. They were using their own money to support Jesus and his disciples.

4 One day a very large crowd was gathering. People were traveling from many different towns to see Jesus. He told them this story: **5** "A farmer went out to plant some grain seeds. As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell onto the hard pathway. People stepped on those seeds, and birds ate them all up. **6** Some of the seeds fell on shallow soil above a layer of rock. As soon as those seeds grew, the plants dried up because their roots could not get past the rock to reach to the moisture. **7** Some of the seeds fell on ground where thorn plants had left their own seeds. The new thorn plants grew up together with the young grain plants. The stronger thorns crowded out the grain plants, so that the grain did not grow well. **8** But some of the grain seeds fell on fertile soil. They grew so well that they produced a crop that had a hundred times as many seeds." After saying these things, Jesus called out to the crowd, "You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

9 Then Jesus' disciples asked him, "What does that story mean?" **10** And he said, "God has given you the privilege of knowing hidden things about how God will rule as king. But I speak to everyone else only in parables, so that,

> 'Although they see, they may not perceive, and although they hear, they may not understand.'

11 Now, this is what the story means: The seeds represent what God wants people to understand. **12** The seeds that fell on the pathway show what happens when people understand the message from God only superficially. This makes it easy for the devil to come and take that message away from their minds. As a result, they do not believe it, and so God does not save them. **13** The seeds that fell on the rocky ground show what happens when people hear the message from God and receive it joyfully, but they do not commit themselves seriously. They only believe for a short time. As soon as difficult things happen to them, they stop trusting in God. **14** The seeds that fell among the thorny plants show what happens to some other people who hear the message from God. As they go on in life, they allow the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life to occupy all their attention. As a result, they do not become spiritually mature. **15** But the seeds that fell on the fertile ground show what happens when people hear the message about God and accept it with great sincerity. They make a firm commitment, and because they keep this commitment, they become spiritually mature.

16 Think about this. When people light a lamp, they do not cover it with a basket. They do not put it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a lampstand. That way everyone who enters the room can see by its light. 17 This illustrates that someday everyone will be able to see everything that is now hidden. And someday everyone will see in the open everything that is now secret. 18 So make sure that you are listening carefully to what I tell you, because if someone believes God's truth, God will enable him to understand even more. But if someone does not believe God's truth, God will cause him not to understand even the little he thinks he has understood."

19 One day Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they could not get near him because there was such a large crowd around him in the house where he was. 20 Then people told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." 21 But he replied to them, "Those who hear the message from God and obey it are as dear to me as my mother and my brothers."

22 On another day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. He said to them, "I would like us to go across to the other side of the lake." So they started to sail across the lake. 23 But as they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. Then a powerful windstorm began on the lake. Soon the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. 24 So Jesus' disciples came over to wake him up. They said to him, "Master! Master! We are all going to die!" He woke up and scolded the wind and the violent waves. The wind stopped blowing, the waves stopped hitting the boat, and everything became calm. 25 Then he said to them, "You acted as if you had no faith!" The disciples were alarmed and amazed because of what had just happened. They kept asking each other, "Who could Jesus be? He is able to command even the winds and the waves, and they obey him."

26 Jesus and his disciples continued sailing and came to the region where the Gerasene people lived. It was on the opposite side of the lake from the district of Galilee. 27 When Jesus came out of the boat onto the land, a certain man from the town in that area met him. This man had demons in him. For a long time this man had not worn clothes and had not lived in a house. Instead, he lived in the burial caves.

28 When the man saw Jesus, he cried out and lay facedown before him. He shouted, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!"

29 The man said this because Jesus had just commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. In the past, people had bound him with chains and shackles and kept a close watch on him. Even so, many times the evil spirit would suddenly seize him by force. Then the man would break free, and the demon would make him go out into deserted places. 30 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" The demon replied, "My name is Thousands." He said that because many demons had entered the man. 31 The demons kept begging Jesus not to command them to go into the deep pit where God punishes demons. 32 There was a large herd of pigs grazing on the hillside nearby. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs, and he allowed them. 33 So the demons left the man and entered the pigs, and the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

34 When those who were taking care of the pigs saw what happened, they ran away! They reported what they had seen to all the people who lived around them. 35 Then the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to where Jesus was, they saw that the man from whom the demons had gone out was sitting at the feet of Jesus. They saw that he had clothes on and his mind was normal again. They realized how powerful Jesus must be, and they became afraid. 36 Those who had seen what had happened told the people who had just arrived how Jesus had rescued the man who had been controlled by demons. 37 Then many people from that place where the Gerasenes lived asked Jesus to leave their area, because they were very afraid. So Jesus and his disciples got into the boat to go back across the lake.
38 Before they left, the man from whom the demons had gone out begged Jesus, saying, "Please, let me go with you!" But instead, Jesus sent him away by saying to him, 39 "No, go back to your home and tell everyone how much God has done for you!" So the man went away and told people throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

40 And when Jesus and his disciples got back across the lake to Capernaum, a crowd of people welcomed them. They had all been waiting for him there. 41 Just then a man named Jairus, who was one of the leaders of the synagogue there, came near to Jesus, and he lay facedown before him. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house. 42 He did this because he had an only daughter, who was about 12 years old, and she was dying. He wanted Jesus to heal her.

Now as Jesus went with him, many people were crowding around him. **43** Now in the crowd there was a woman who had been suffering for 12 years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. She had spent all her money[3] to pay doctors to help her, but none of them was able to heal her. **44** She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his robe. At once her bleeding stopped. **45** Jesus said, "Who touched me?" Everyone around Jesus said that they had not touched him. Peter said, "Master, there are many people crowding around you and pressing up against you. So any one of them might have touched you!" **46** But Jesus said, "I know that someone deliberately touched me, because power has gone out from me to heal that person." **47** Then the woman realized that she could not hide. She came trembling to Jesus and respectfully lay facedown on the ground before him. As the other people were listening, she explained why she had touched Jesus and how she gotten better immediately. **48** And Jesus said to her, "My dear woman, because you believed that I could heal you, you are now well. Now go on your way, and may God's peace be with you."

49 While Jesus was still speaking to the woman, a man from Jairus' house came and said to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. So do not take up any more of the teacher's time." **50** But when Jesus heard that, he said to Jairus, "Do not be afraid. Just believe in me, and she will live again." **51** When he arrived outside the house, Jesus did not allow anyone to go in the house with him except for Peter, John, and James, and the girl's father and mother. **52** And all the people there were loudly demonstrating how sad they were that the girl had died. But Jesus said to them, "Stop crying! She is not dead! She is only sleeping!" **53** And the people laughed at him because they knew that the girl was dead. **54** But Jesus took hold of her hand and called to her, saying, "Child, get up!" **55** And immediately she came back to life and she got up. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. **56** And her parents were amazed, but Jesus told them not to tell anyone else yet what had happened.

9 **1** Then Jesus called together his 12 representatives and gave them the right and power to drive out all kinds of demons and to heal people's diseases. **2** He sent them out to announce the good news about how God would rule as king. He told them to heal people who were sick.
3 Before they left, he said to them, "Do not take anything with you for your journey. Do not take a walking stick or a traveler's bag or food or money. Do not bring an extra tunic.

4 Whatever house you enter, stay in that house until you leave that area. **5** If the people in any town do not welcome you, you should not stay there. Instead, leave that town and, as you go, shake its dust off your feet. That will be a warning to them **for rejecting you**." **6** Then Jesus' disciples left and traveled through many villages. Everywhere they went, they talked to people about the good news from God, and they healed sick people.

7 Herod, the ruler over the district of Galilee, heard about everything that was happening, and he was perplexed. Some people were saying that John the Baptizer had become alive again. **8** Other people were saying that the prophet Elijah had appeared again. Still others were saying that one of the other prophets from long ago had become alive again. **9** But Herod said, "It cannot be John, because I had his head cut off. So who is this man? I keep hearing such amazing things about him!" And he kept looking for a way to see Jesus.

10 When Jesus' representatives returned from their trip, they told Jesus everything that they had done. Then he took them aside to go by themselves with him to the town of Bethsaida. **11** But when the crowds learned where Jesus had gone, they followed him there. He welcomed them and spoke to them about how God was going to rule as king. He also healed those who were sick.

12 Now it was getting late in the day, so Jesus' 12 representatives came to him and said, "Please send this large crowd of people away so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms to get some food and find places to stay, since we are out here in this isolated place." **13** But he said to them, "You must give them something to eat!" They replied, "All we have are five small loaves of bread and two small fish. We could never go buy enough food for all these people!" **14** **They said this** because there were about 5,000 men there. Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have the people sit down in groups. Put about 50 people in each group." **15** So the disciples did that, and the people all sat down. **16** Then Jesus took the five loaves of bread and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and praised God for them. Then he divided the bread and fish into pieces and gave them to the disciples for them to distribute to the people. **17** They all ate, and everyone had enough to eat. Then the disciples collected the leftover pieces of food, which filled 12 baskets!

18 One day while Jesus was praying in private, with his disciples nearby, he asked them,
"Who do the crowds say that I am?" **19** They replied, "**Some people say that you are** John the
Baptizer, but others say that you are the prophet Elijah, and still others say that you are one of
the other prophets from long ago who has come back to life again." **20** He asked them, "What
about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, who has come
from God." **21** Then Jesus warned them strongly not to tell that to anyone yet. **22** Then he
said, "I, the Son of Man, must suffer many things: The elders, chief priests, and teachers of the
Jewish laws will reject me and kill me. Then, on the third day after that, I will come back to
life again."

23 Then he said to them all, "If any one of you wants to be my disciple, you must not do
only what you want to do. Rather, every day you must be willing to suffer, even to the point of
giving up your life. That is how to be my disciple. **24** **You must do that** because those who try
to save their own lives will lose them eternally, but those who give up their lives in order to
become my disciples will save their lives eternally. **25** After all, how does it benefit you if you
gain everything in this world but you then end up losing, or even destroying, your own self?
26 Suppose someone is afraid to say that they believe in me and that they follow my teaching.
Then, I, the Son of Man, will say that such a person does not belong to me. This will happen
when I come back in my glory and in the glory of God the Father and of the holy angels.
27 But you can be sure of this: Some of you who are standing here now will not die until you
see God ruling as king!"

28 About eight days after Jesus said those things, he took Peter, John, and James with him
and went up onto a mountain to pray **there**. **29** While he was praying, the appearance of his
face became very different, and his clothes began to shine brightly. **30** All at once, two
prophets from long ago were there talking with Jesus. They were Moses and Elijah. **31** These
men appeared surrounded in glory. They spoke with Jesus about how he was going to die. This
was something that was going to happen soon in Jerusalem. **32** Peter and the other disciples
who were with him were very sleepy. But when they woke up fully, they saw how brightly
Jesus was shining. They also saw Moses and Elijah standing with him. **33** As Moses and Elijah
were starting to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here! We should
make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!" But he really did not

realize what he was saying. **34** As he was saying these things, a cloud formed and covered them. The disciples were afraid as the cloud surrounded them. **35** God's voice spoke to them from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!" **36** When the voice had finished speaking, **the three disciples saw that** only Jesus was there. They kept all this to themselves. For a long time they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

37 The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd of people met Jesus. **38** Suddenly a man from the crowd called out, "Teacher, I plead with you, do something to help my son! He is my only child. **39** Here is what is happening. An evil spirit suddenly seizes him and causes him to scream. It shakes him violently and causes him to foam at the mouth. This spirit hardly ever leaves my child and, when it does, it injures him severely. **40** I pleaded with your disciples to command the evil spirit to come out of him, but they were not able to do it!" **41** In response, Jesus said, "This generation of people does not believe, and so its thinking is corrupt! How much longer must I be with you before you believe?" **Then he said to the boy's father,** "Bring your son here to me!" **42** While they were bringing the boy to him, the demon threw the boy down to the ground and shook him severely. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then he returned him to his father. **43** Then all the people there were completely amazed at the great power God had shown.

While they were all still marveling at all the miracles Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples, **44** "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you, because someone will soon hand me, the Son of Man, over to my enemies." **45** But the disciples did not understand what he meant by this. God prevented them from understanding it so that they would not know yet what he meant, and they were afraid to ask him about what he had said.

46 Sometime later, the disciples began to argue among themselves about which one of them would be the most important. **47** But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he brought a young child over and had the child stand beside him. **48** He said to them, "If someone welcomes a little child like this one because of me, it is the same as welcoming me. And if someone welcomes me, it is the same as welcoming God, who sent me. Remember that those among you who seem to be the least important are the ones whom God considers to be most important."

49 John replied to Jesus, “Master, we saw a man who was using your name to command
demons to come out of people. But we told him to stop doing that, because he was not working
closely with you the way we are.” **50** But Jesus told John, “Do not stop him from doing that! If
someone is not doing something that is harmful to you, then what he is doing is helpful to
you!”

51 When it was getting close to the time when God would take him back up to heaven,
Jesus firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem. **52** He sent some messengers ahead of him. They
traveled on and went into a village in the region of Samaria to try to arrange for him to stay
there. **53** But the Samaritans would not let Jesus stay in their village, because he was on his
way to Jerusalem. **54** Two of his disciples, James and John, **got angry when they** saw **that the
Samaritans were not going to welcome them**. So they asked Jesus, “Lord, do you want us to
command fire to come down from heaven and destroy these people?” **55** But Jesus turned **to
them** and sternly told them they were wrong to say that. **56** So they went to a different village.

57 As Jesus and the disciples were walking along the road, someone said to him, “I will go
with you wherever you go!” **58** Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes in the ground to live in, and
birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, do not have a home to sleep in!” **59** Jesus said to a
different person, “Come with me!” But that person said, “Lord, let me first go home and bury
my father.” **60** But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead. I want you to go and
tell people everywhere that they can have God rule their lives.” **61** Someone else said, “Lord, I
will come with you and be your disciple, but first let me go home to say goodbye to my
family.” **62** Jesus said to him, “Anyone who is like a farmer who tries to plow his field while
looking behind him is not able to serve God as his ruler.”

10 **1** After that, Jesus appointed 72 other disciples **to go and prepare people to hear him**. He
sent them out in pairs to go ahead of him to every town and village where he was intending to
go himself. **2** He said to them, “Many people are ready to believe in me, but there are only a
few of you whom I can send out to help them. So pray to God**, who wants all of those people to
believe,** and plead with him for more disciples who can go and help them. **3** Go now, but
remember that I am sending you out to tell my message to people who will be hostile to you.
4 Do not bring along any money. Do not bring **a lot of things with you in** a pack. Do not bring

extra shoes. Do not stop and talk with people along the way. 5 Whenever you enter a house,
first say to the people who live there, 'May God bless everyone in this house with peace!' 6 If
the people who live there desire God's peace, then they will experience the peace you are
offering them. But if they do not desire God's peace, then you will experience that peace
yourselves. 7 Stay in that same house until you leave that village. Do not move around from
one house to another. Eat and drink whatever they provide for you, because a worker deserves
to receive payment for his work. 8 If you enter any town and the people there welcome you,
eat whatever food they provide for you. 9 Heal the people in that city who are sick. Tell
everyone, 'You are seeing close up what it will be like when God rules everywhere as king.'
10 But if you enter any town and the people there do not welcome you, go into its main streets
and say, 11 'As a warning against you, we will wipe off even the dust that sticks to our feet as
we are leaving your town. But you must realize that you have seen close up what it will be like
when God rules everywhere as king!' 12 I want you to know that at the time when God judges
everyone, God will punish the people of that town even more severely than the wicked people
who lived long ago in the city of Sodom!

13 How terrible it will be for you people who live in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida! I
say this because I did great miracles while I was in your cities. If I had performed those same
miracles in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon, the wicked people who lived there would have
been very sorry for their sins. They would have shown this by sitting on the ground wearing
coarse clothing and putting ashes on their heads. 14 So when God judges everyone, he will
punish you more severely than the wicked people who lived in Tyre and Sidon. 15 I also have
something to say to you people who live in the town of Capernaum. You may think that God is
going to give you great rewards. No, God is not going to reward you at all!"

16 Jesus also said to the disciples, "Whoever listens to your message is, in effect, listening to
me. Whoever rejects your message is, in effect, rejecting me. And whoever rejects me is, in
effect, rejecting God who sent me."

17 The 72 people whom Jesus appointed went and did what he told them to do. When they
returned, they were very joyful. They said, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us when, by your
authority, we commanded them to leave people!" 18 Jesus told them, "While you were away
doing that, I saw Satan lose a position of advantage as suddenly and quickly as lightning comes

down! 19 Listen! I have given you the power to defeat evil spirits. I have even given you enough power to defeat our enemy, Satan. Nothing will hurt you at all. 20 But do not only rejoice that the evil spirits must obey you. You should rejoice even more that God has written your names in heaven, because that means you will be with God forever."

21 Right then, the Holy Spirit gave Jesus great joy. He said, "God my Father, you are Lord over everything in heaven and on earth. I praise you that you have prevented people who think they are smart from understanding things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth as readily as little children do. Yes, Father, you have done that because it pleased you to do so. 22 God, my Father, has given everything to me. Only my Father really knows me, his Son. And only I, his Son, really know my Father. But I do choose to show some people who he is."

23 Then Jesus said, just to his disciples, "God has given you a great gift by letting you see the things that I am doing! 24 I want you to know that many prophets and kings would have liked to see the things that you are seeing me do. But they did not get to see them, because they lived long ago. They would have liked to hear the things that you have been hearing me say. But they did not get to hear them, because they lived long ago."

25 A man who taught Jewish laws was there. He wanted to test Jesus by asking him a difficult question. So he stood up and asked, "Teacher, what do I have to do in order to live with God forever?" 26 Jesus said to him, "You have read what Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him. What do those laws say?" 27 The man replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as much as you love yourself." 28 Jesus told him, "You have answered correctly. If you do all that, you will live with God forever."

29 But the man wanted to show that God would approve of him. So he said to Jesus, "Which people are my neighbors whom I should love?" 30 Jesus replied, "One day, a Jewish man was traveling along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Some bandits attacked him. They took away most of the man's clothes and everything else that he had. They beat him until he was almost dead. Then they left him there. 31 It happened that a Jewish priest was going along that road. When he saw that man, instead of helping him, he passed by on the other side of the road. 32 Similarly, a Levite who worked in God's temple also came to that place and saw the

man. But he too passed by on the other side of the road. 33 Then a man from the region of Samaria came along that road to where the man was lying. When he saw that man, he pitied him. 34 He went over to him and put some olive oil and wine on his wounds to help heal them. He wrapped strips of cloth around the wounds. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next morning he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of this man. If you need to spend more than this amount to care for him, I will pay you back when I return.'" 36 Then Jesus asked, "Three people found the man whom the bandits had attacked. Which one of them would you say was a true neighbor to that man?" 37 The teacher of the law replied, "The one who acted mercifully toward him." Jesus said to him, "That is correct. So you should go and act like that toward anyone who needs your help."

38 As Jesus and his disciples continued to travel, they entered a certain village. There a woman whose name was Martha invited them to come to her house. 39 Her sister, whose name was Mary, sat near Jesus' feet and listened to what he was teaching. 40 But Martha was worrying about preparing the meal for all of them. She went to Jesus and said, "Lord, my sister has left me to prepare everything by myself. You must know that is not fair. Please tell her to help me!" 41 But Jesus replied to her, "Martha, Martha, you are very worried about many things. 42 But the one thing that is really important is to listen to what I am teaching. Because Mary has chosen the best thing to do, I will not tell her to do something else."

11 1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us how to pray. John the Baptist did that for his own disciples, and we would like you to do that for us." 2 He said to them, "When you pray, say things like this: 'Father, may all people honor your name as holy. May you soon rule all people everywhere. 3 Please give us the food we need each day. 4 Please forgive us for the wrong things that we have done. We ourselves will forgive people for the wrong things they have done to us. Help us to not sin when something tempts us.'"

5 Then he said to them, "Suppose that one of you goes to the house of a friend at midnight. You stand outside and call to him, 'My friend, please lend me three loaves of bread! 6 Another friend of mine who is traveling has just arrived at my house. But I do not have any food ready

to serve him!' [7] And suppose that he responds from inside the house, 'Do not bother me! I have already locked the door, and my whole family is in bed. It would be too hard for me to get up and give you something!' [8] I tell you, he may not want to get up and give his friend any food just because he is his friend. But if he keeps on asking, the man inside will certainly get up and give him everything he needs. [9] So I tell you: Keep asking God for the things you need, and he will give them to you. Keep seeking those things from God, and you will receive them. Ask God to make things possible for you, and he will act on your behalf. [10] You should do this because anyone who keeps asking God for the things he needs will receive them. Anyone who seeks those things from God will receive them. If anyone asks God to make things possible for him, God will act on his behalf. [11] Suppose one of you fathers had a son who asked you for a fish to eat. You certainly would not give him a poisonous snake instead! [12] Suppose he asked you for an egg. You certainly would not give him a scorpion instead! [13] Even though you people are sinful, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. So it is even more certain that your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

[14] One day Jesus was forcing out a demon who was keeping a man from speaking. After Jesus forced the demon out, the man began to talk. This amazed the crowd of people that was there. [15] But some of them said, "It is Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to force out demons!" [16] Other people there questioned his authority. They demanded that he perform a miracle to prove that God had sent him. [17] But he knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. If the people in one household oppose each other, they will destroy their family. [18] Similarly, if Satan and his demons were fighting against each other, his rule over them would certainly not last! I say this because you are saying that I force out demons by the power of the ruler of demons! [19] If it is true that Beelzebul is enabling me to force out demons, it must also be true that he is enabling your disciples to force out demons. **But you know that is not true.** So your own disciples prove that you are wrong. [20] I must actually be forcing out demons by the power of God. This means that God has begun to rule over you."

[21] **Jesus continued,** "When a strong man who has many weapons guards his own house, no one can steal the things inside. [22] But when someone else who is stronger attacks that man and

subdues him, he takes away the weapons that the man was depending on. Then he can steal anything he wants from that man's house. **23** Anyone who is not supporting me is opposing me. Anyone who is not bringing people to me is sending them away from me."

24 **Then Jesus said,** "An evil spirit might leave someone and wander around in desolate areas looking for someone else to live in. If it does not find anyone there, it may say, 'I am going to go back to the person I used to live in!' **25** So it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that someone has swept clean and put in order**, but which has no one living in it**. **26** Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is. They all enter that person and begin living in him. That person's condition was bad before, and it becomes even worse."

27 When Jesus said that, a woman in the crowd **who was listening** called out to him loudly, "God is pleased with the woman who gave birth to you and who nursed you!" **28** Then he replied, "God is even more pleased with those who hear his message and obey it!"

29 More and more people were coming to join the crowd around Jesus. He said, "The people living at this time are evil people. They want me to do a miracle **to prove that I have come from God**. But the only proof they will see is a miracle like the one that happened to Jonah. **30** Long ago God did a miracle for Jonah to show the people living in the city of Nineveh that he had sent him. In the same way, God will do a similar miracle for me, the Son of Man, to show the people living now that he has sent me. **31** Long ago the Queen of Sheba traveled a great distance to hear the wise things that Solomon said. Now someone greater than Solomon is right here with you. **But you have not really listened to what I am saying.** Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, she will stand up and condemn the people who are living now. **32** The people who lived in the ancient city of Nineveh turned from their sinful ways when Jonah preached to them. And now I, who am greater than Jonah, have come and preached to you. **But you have not turned from your sinful ways.** Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, the people who lived in Nineveh will stand up and condemn the people who are living now.

33 People who light a lamp do not hide it or put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that those who enter the room can see the light. **34** Your eye lets light into your body. If your eye is working right, then your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is

not working right, then your body will not get any light. **35** Therefore, be careful not to think that your eye is working right and letting in light if it is actually not working right and not letting in any light. **36** So if light is getting into every part of your body, so that no part of it is in the dark, then all of your body will be full of light. Bright light will shine all over you inside, just as the bright light of a lamp shines all over you outside."

37 After Jesus finished saying those things, a Pharisee invited him to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table to eat. **38** The Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus did not ritually wash his hands first before eating. **39** Jesus said to him, "You Pharisees wash the outside of cups and dishes before you eat, but within yourselves you are very greedy and wicked. **40** You foolish people! Surely you know that God not only made the outside, but also made the inside! **41** **Instead of worrying about dishes being ritually clean, be merciful and** give whatever is inside the dishes to people in need. Then both the inside and outside of you will be acceptable to God.

42 But how terrible it will be for you Pharisees! You carefully give to God a tenth of all you have, including even the herbs that you grow in your gardens. But then you do not show God's love or fairness toward others. You should make sure that you do that, in addition to giving to God. **43** How terrible it will be for you Pharisees, because you like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues, and you like people to greet you **with special honor** in the marketplaces. **44** How terrible it will be for you, because you are like unmarked graves that people walk over without realizing it and so become ceremonially unclean."

45 One of the teachers of the Jewish laws who were there complained to Jesus, "Teacher, when you say things like that, you are criticizing us too!" **46** But Jesus responded, "How terrible it will also be for you who are teachers of the Jewish laws! I say this because you tell people to follow so many rules, yet you will not do even the smallest thing to help them.
47 How terrible it will be for you, because you construct buildings to mark the graves of the prophets, but your ancestors are the ones who killed them! **48** So when you build these buildings, you are declaring that you approve of what your ancestors did when they killed the prophets. **49** So God, who is very wise, also said, 'I will send prophets and messengers to guide my people. But they will cause them to suffer greatly. They will even kill some of them.'
50 As a result, the people living at this time will be punished for the murder of all the prophets

whom people have killed since the world was created. 51 They will be punished for every murder from that of Adam's son Abel, whose brother Cain killed him, right through to the murder of the prophet Zechariah, whom the king's agents killed in the temple between the altar and the holy place. 52 How terrible it will be for you teachers of the Jewish laws. You are keeping people from knowing about God! You do not know God yourselves, and you make things difficult for other people who want to know God better."

53 After Jesus finished saying those things, he left the Pharisee's house. Then the teachers of the Jewish laws and the Pharisees began to act in a very hostile way toward him. They questioned him intensely about many things. 54 They kept listening for him to say something wrong so that they could accuse him of false teaching.

12 1 Meanwhile, many thousands of people gathered around Jesus. There were so many that they were stepping on each other. The first thing he said to his disciples was, "Be careful that you do not become like the Pharisees, who act religious in public but do evil things in secret. 2 It is useless for people to try to keep their sins a secret. Someday God will let everyone know everything people are trying to hide. 3 Someday people will hear publicly everything you have said privately. Someday someone will shout for everyone to hear what you have whispered in your room.

4 My friends, listen carefully! Do not be afraid of people. They can kill you, but they cannot do anything more to you after that! 5 I will tell you whom you should truly be afraid of. You should be afraid of God. Not only does he have the right to cause people to die, he also has the right to throw them into hell afterward! Yes, I tell you, God is the one you should truly be afraid of! 6 Think about the sparrows. They have so little value that you can buy five of them for only two small coins. And yet God never forgets any of them! 7 God even knows how many hairs there are on your head. Do not be afraid, because you are more valuable to God than many sparrows.

8 I tell you also that if people tell others that they are my disciples, then I, the Son of Man, will say to God's angels that those people are my disciples. 9 But if they tell others that they are not my disciples, then I will say to God's angels that those people are not my disciples. 10 I also tell you that if people say bad things about me, the Son of Man, God will forgive them for

that. But if people say bad things about the Holy Spirit, God will not forgive them for that.
11 So when people bring you into the synagogues **to question you before the religious leaders there** and to other people who have power in the country, do not worry about how you will answer them or about what you should say, **12** because the Holy Spirit will tell you at that very time what you should say."

13 Then one of the people in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide our father's property with me!" **14** But Jesus replied to him, "Man, no one made me a judge to settle arguments that people have about property!" **15** Then he said to the whole crowd, "Be careful not to be greedy in any way! What matters about a person's life is not how many things he owns."

16 Then Jesus told the crowd this story: "The lands of a certain rich man produced abundant crops. **17** He thought to himself, 'I do not know what to do, because I do not have any place **big enough** to store all my crops!' **18** Then he thought to himself, 'I know what I will do! I will tear down my grain bins and build larger ones! Then I can store all my grain and other things in the big new bins. **19** Then I will say to myself, "Now I have stored up enough things to last many years. So I will take life easy. I will eat and drink and be happy"' **20** But God said to him, 'You foolish man! Tonight you will die! Then all the things you have saved up for yourself will belong to someone else, not to you!'"

21 Then Jesus ended this illustration by saying, "That is what will happen to those who store up things just for themselves and do not value the things that God considers valuable."

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Here is something you should learn from the story. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat to stay alive or enough clothes to wear to stay warm. **23** After all, your life is more important than the food you eat, and your body is more important than the clothes you put on it. **24** Think about the birds. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops. They do not have rooms or buildings in which to store crops, but God provides food for them. And you are certainly much more valuable than birds. **25** None of you can add even a minute to his life by worrying about it! **26** So since you cannot even do that small thing, you certainly should not worry about anything else. **27** Think about the way that flowers grow. They do not work to earn money, and they do not make their

own clothes. But I tell you that King Solomon, who lived long ago and wore glorious clothes, never dressed as beautifully as a single flower. 28 God makes the plants beautiful, even though they grow for only a short time. Then people cut them down and throw them into the fire. But you are very precious to God. He will care for you even more than he cares for the plants. You should trust God more than you do. 29 As for you, do not wonder about what you will eat and drink, and do not keep worrying about those things. 30 While the people who do not know God all worry about such things, you can be confident that your Father in heaven knows that you need them. 31 Instead, concentrate on what you can do for the kingdom of God. When you do, you can trust God to provide everything you need.

32 So you should not be afraid, my friends. Your Father in heaven wants you to be part of his kingdom and receive all of its benefits. 33 So sell the things you own and give the money to people who need food or clothing or a place to live. Get yourselves wallets that do not wear out. I mean store up treasure in heaven where it will always be safe. There no thief can steal anything and no moths will destroy your clothing. 34 After all, whatever it is that you treasure, that is what you will think about and spend your time on.

35 Always be ready for doing God's work, like people who have put on their work clothes and are keeping the lights on all night. 36 Be ready for me to return, like servants who are waiting for their master to return after being at a wedding feast. They are waiting to open the door for him as soon as he arrives and knocks at the door. 37 It will be very good for those servants if they are awake when their master returns. Let me tell you this: He will reward them by dressing like a servant, telling them to sit down, and serving them a meal. 38 Even if he comes home late in the evening or in the middle of the night, if he finds that his servants are awake and ready for him, he will be very pleased with them. 39 And I want you to consider this: If the owner of a house knew that a thief was coming, and at what time, he would stay awake and not let the thief break into his house. 40 So be ready, because I, the Son of Man, will come again at a time when you do not expect me."

41 Peter asked, "Lord, are you giving this illustration only for us, your disciples? Or is it for the crowd too?" 42 Jesus replied, "I am saying it for everyone who is like a faithful and wise servant who is a manager in his master's house. His master puts him in charge of his other servants, to make sure they get their food at the proper time. 43 If his master comes home and

sees that he is doing that work, he will reward that servant. **44** Let me tell you this: The master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. **45** But that servant who was put in charge might say to himself, 'My master is going to be away for a long time.' Then he might start to beat the other servants. He might also start to eat and drink a lot and get drunk. **46** If he does that, his master might return at a time when the servant does not expect him. Then his master will punish him severely and assign him a place with those who do not serve him faithfully. **47** The servant who knew what his master wanted but did not get ready and do it will be severely punished. **48** But every servant who did not know what his master wanted him to do, and then did something wrong, will only get a mild punishment. The master will expect much from all servants to whom he has given much. And the master will expect even more from servants whom he has entrusted with many responsibilities.

49 I came to stir up spiritual passions in people. I wish that they were already acting on them! **50** Soon I must go through terrible suffering. I will continue to be distressed until I finish my suffering. **51** You should know that I did not come so that people would live together peacefully. No, you must understand that instead, people will take sides for and against me. **52** Be prepared, because this is what is going to happen. In a family of five people, some will believe in me and some will not. Three family members will join together against the other two. **53** Family members will conflict. A father will oppose his son, or a son will oppose his father. A mother will oppose her daughter, or a daughter will oppose her mother. A mother-in-law will oppose her daughter-in-law, or a daughter-in-law will oppose her mother-in-law."

54 He also said to the crowds, "When you see a dark cloud forming in the west, you immediately say 'It is going to rain!' and that is what happens. **55** When the wind blows from the south, you say, 'It is going to be a very hot day!' and you are right. **56** You hypocrites! By observing the clouds and the wind, you are able to discern what is happening regarding the weather. You should be able to discern what God is doing at this present time!

57 Each of you ought to decide for yourselves what is right! **58** Here is one thing you should do. You should try to settle things with someone who has accused you while you are still on the way to the court. If he forces you to go to the judge, the judge could decide that you are guilty and turn you over to the court officer. Then that officer will put you in prison. **59** I

tell you that if you go to prison, you will never get out of there until you are able to pay every bit of what the judge says you owe."

13 **1** At that time, some people who were there in the crowd told Jesus about what had recently happened to some Galileans. Pilate, the Roman governor, had ordered soldiers to kill the Galileans while they were offering sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. **2** Jesus replied to them, "Do you think that this happened to those people from Galilee because they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? **3** I assure you, that was not the reason! Instead, God will similarly punish all of you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior. **4** Or what about those 18 people who died when the tower in **the neighborhood of** Siloam fell on them? Do you think that this happened to them because they were worse sinners than everyone else in Jerusalem? **5** I assure you, that was not the reason! But instead, you need to realize that God will similarly punish all of you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior!"

6 Then Jesus told them this story: "A man planted a fig tree in his garden. **Each year** he came to pick the figs, but there were **always** none on it. **7** Then he said to the gardener, 'Look at this tree! I have been looking for fruit on it every year for the past three years, but there have been no figs. Cut it down! It is just using up the nutrients in the soil for nothing!' **8** But the gardener replied, 'Sir, leave it here for another year. I will dig around it and fertilize it. **9** If it has figs on it next year, we can allow it to keep growing! But if it does not bear any fruit by then, you can cut it down.'"

10 On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was teaching people in one of the synagogues. **11** There was a woman there whom an evil spirit had crippled for 18 years. She was always bent over. She could not stand up straight. **12** When Jesus saw her, he called her over to him. He said to her, "Woman, I have healed you of this illness!" **13** He put his hands on her. Immediately she stood up straight and began praising God! **14** But the leader of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had healed her on the Jewish rest day. So he said to the people, "There are six days each week on which our laws permit people to work. If you need healing, those are the days to come to the synagogue for someone to heal you. Do not come on our day of rest!" **15** Then Jesus replied to him, "You and your fellow religious leaders are hypocrites! Each of you **also works on the day of rest sometimes! For example, you** untie your ox or donkey

to lead it from the stall to a place where it can drink water. **16** This woman is a Jew, descended from Abraham! But Satan has kept her crippled for 18 years, as though he had tied her up! Certainly you would agree that it is right that I free her from this disabling disease, even if I do it on a day of rest!" **17** After he said that, his enemies were ashamed of themselves. But all the other people were happy about all the wonderful things he was doing.

18 Then he said, "I want to explain what it is like when God rules as king. I will give you a picture to help you understand. **19** It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in his field. It grew until it became big, like a tree. It was so big that birds built nests in its branches."

20 Then again he said, "I will tell you in another (way what) it is like when God rules. **21** It is like a little bit of yeast that a woman mixed with about 25 kilograms of flour. That small amount of yeast made the whole batch of dough swell up."

22 Jesus continued traveling toward Jerusalem. He stopped in all the towns and villages along the way and taught the people. **23** Someone asked him, "Lord, will God only save a few people?" Jesus replied so that everyone there could hear, **24** "You need to try hard to enter, because it is very difficult. I tell you that many people will try to get in, but they will not be able to. **25** After the owner of the house gets up and locks the door, you will stand outside and you will knock on the door. And you will beg the owner and say to him, 'Lord, open the door for us!' But he will reply, 'No, I will not open it, because I do not know you, and I do not know where you are from!' **26** Then you will say, '**You must have forgotten that** we ate meals with you, and you taught us in the streets of our towns!' **27** But he will say, 'I tell you again, I do not know where you are from. You are all wicked people! Get away from here!'" **28** **Then Jesus continued by saying,** "You will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob **in the distance**. All the prophets who lived long ago will also be there where God rules everything as king. But you will be outside, crying and grinding your teeth in sorrow! **29** But inside there will be people from every part of the world**, including many non-Jewish people**. They will all celebrate together where God rules everything as king. **30** Think about this: Some people who seem the least important now will be the most important then, and others who seem important now will be the least important then."

31 That same day, some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, “Leave this area, because the ruler Herod Antipas wants to kill you!” 32 He replied to them, “Go and tell that cunning man, who thinks he can hurt me but who really cannot, this message from me: ‘Listen! I am expelling demons and performing miracles now, and I will continue doing so for a short time. After that, I will finish my work.’ 33 But I must also continue my trip to Jerusalem during the coming days, since the Jewish leaders have always acted as if it is not appropriate to kill a prophet in a place other than Jerusalem.

34 Oh, people of Jerusalem! You killed the prophets who lived long ago. Then you killed others whom God sent to you. You killed them by throwing stones at them. Many times I have wanted to gather you together to protect you, as a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want me to do that. 35 Now look! God will no longer protect you, people of Jerusalem. I will also tell you this: I will enter your city only once more. After that, you will not see me until the time when I return, and then you will say about me, ‘May God bless this man who comes with God’s authority!’”

14 1 One day, which was a day of rest, Jesus went to eat at the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. This leader had invited other Pharisees to the same meal. They were all watching Jesus carefully to try to find grounds to accuse him. 2 Right there in front of Jesus was a man who had a disease that caused his arms and legs to be very swollen. 3 Jesus asked the experts in Jewish law and the Pharisees who were present, “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the day of rest, or not?” 4 They did not reply. So Jesus put his hands on the man and healed him. Then he told him he could go. 5 And he said to the others there, “If one of you had a son or an ox that fell into a well on the day of rest, you would pull him out immediately.” 6 Again, they were not able to answer him.

7 Jesus noticed that the people who had been invited to the meal were choosing to sit in the places where important people usually sit. So he gave this advice to them. 8 “When someone invites one of you to a wedding feast, do not sit in a place where important people sit. It may be that he has invited a person who is more important than you to the feast. 9 When the host who invited both of you sees where you are each sitting, he will say to you, ‘Let this person have your seat!’ Then you will have to take the least important seat, and you will be ashamed.

10 Instead, when someone invites you to a feast, go and sit in the least important seat. Then when the host who invited everyone comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, come sit in a better seat!’ Then all the people who are eating with you will see that he is honoring you. **11** For God will humble those who exalt themselves, and he will exalt those who humble themselves.”

12 Jesus also said to the Pharisee who had invited him to the meal, “When you invite people to a midday or evening meal, do not only invite your friends, relatives, or rich neighbors, since they will later repay you by inviting you for a meal. **13** Instead, when you give a feast, invite poor people, crippled people, lame people or blind people. **14** If you do that, God will reward you, because they will not be able to repay you. You can be sure that God will pay you back at the time when he causes righteous people to become alive again.”

15 One of those who were eating with him heard him say that. He said to Jesus, “God has truly blessed everyone who will get to celebrate where God rules everything as king!” **16** Jesus replied to him, “One time a man decided to prepare a large feast. He invited many people to come. **17** When it was time for the feast, he sent his servant to tell those whom he had invited, ‘Come now, because everything is ready!’ **18** But when the servant did that, all of the people whom he had invited began to say why they could not come. The first man to whom the servant went said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go there and see it. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!’ **19** Another person said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I must go to examine them. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!’ **20** Another person said, ‘I have just gotten married, so I cannot come.’ **21** So the servant returned to his master and reported what everyone had said. The owner of the house was angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city and find poor and crippled and blind and lame people, and bring them here into my house!’ **22** **After** the servant **went out and did that, he came back and** said, ‘Sir, I have done what you told me to do, but there is still room for more people.’ **23** So his master said to him, ‘Then go outside the city. Search for people along the highways. Search also along the narrow roads with hedges. Strongly urge the people in those places to come to my house. I want it to be full of people! **24** Moreover I tell you this, those men whom I invited first will not get to enjoy my feast**, because they refused to come**.’”

25 A large crowd of people was traveling with Jesus. He turned toward the people and said
to them, 26 "If anyone comes to me who loves his father and mother and wife and children and
brothers and sisters more than he loves me, he can not be my disciple. He must even love me
more than he loves his own life! 27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and does not obey
me cannot be my disciple. 28 After all, if one of you wanted to build a tower, you would first
sit down and determine how much it would cost. That way you would know whether you had
enough money to finish it. 29 Otherwise, if you laid the foundation and were not able to finish
the rest of the tower, everyone who saw it would make fun of you. 30 They would say, 'This
man started to build a tower, but he was not able to finish it!' 31 Or suppose a king had 10,000
soldiers in his army. And suppose another king who had 20,000 soldiers was coming to attack
him. Before sending his army out to battle, that first king would certainly sit down with his
advisors to determine whether he could defeat the other king's army. 32 Suppose he decided
his army could not defeat the other army. Then he would send messengers to the other king
while his army was still far away. He would tell the messengers to ask, 'What must I do to
have peace with you?' 33 So, similarly, if any one of you does not first decide that you are
willing to give up all that you have, you cannot be my disciple."

34 Jesus also said, "You are like salt, which is very useful. But if salt were to lose its
saltiness, no one could ever make it taste salty again. 35 If salt does not taste salty anymore, it is
no longer any good even for the soil or the manure heap. People just throw it away. You should
think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

15 1 Now, many tax collectors and other people whom the religious leaders considered to
be sinners kept coming to Jesus to listen to him teach. 2 When the Pharisees and teachers of
the Jewish laws saw this, they began to grumble. They said, "This man welcomes sinners and
even eats with them." They thought Jesus was defiling himself by doing that. 3 So Jesus told
them this parable: 4 "Suppose that one of you had 100 sheep and you lost one of them.
Certainly you would leave the 99 other sheep in the wilderness and go search for the lost sheep
until you had found it. 5 When you found it, you would joyfully put it on your shoulders to
carry it home. 6 Then when you arrived home, you would call together your friends and
neighbors and say to them: 'Be joyful with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!'

7 You should know that, in a similar way, there is great joy among those in heaven when one
sinner repents from his sins. That joy is greater than their joy over many people who are
already right with God and do not need to repent.

8 Or suppose that a woman had ten valuable silver coins but lost one of them. Certainly
she would light a lamp and sweep the floor and search carefully until she found it. 9 When she
found it, she would call together her friends and neighbors and say to them, 'Be very happy
with me, because I have found the coin that I lost!' 10 I tell you that, in a similar way, there is
much joy among the angels of God when one sinner repents from his sins."

11 Then Jesus continued and said, "There once was a man who had two sons. 12 One day
the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me now the share of your property that I would
otherwise have received when you died.' So the father divided his property between his two
sons. 13 Only a few days later, the younger son gathered together all that he owned and
traveled to a country far away. There in that country he spent all his money foolishly in
wasteful, immoral living. 14 After he had spent all his money, there was a severe famine
throughout that country. Soon he did not have anything left to live on. 15 So he went to a man
who lived in that country and asked him to hire him. So the man sent him out to his fields to
feed his pigs. 16 **He became so hungry that** he wished he could eat the bean pods that the pigs
ate, yet no one gave him anything. 17 Finally he began to think clearly about how foolish he
had been, and he said to himself: 'All of my father's hired servants have more than enough
food to eat, but here I am dying because I do not have anything to eat! 18 So I will leave here
and go back to my father. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you.
19 I do not deserve to have you consider me your son any more. Please let me work for you as
one of your hired servants."' 20 So he left there and started traveling back to his father's house.
But while he was still a great distance from the house, his father saw him and felt deep
compassion for him. He ran to his son and embraced him and kissed him on the cheek. 21 His
son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. So I do not deserve to
have you consider me your son any more.' 22 But his father said to his servants; 'Go quickly
and bring my best robe and put it on my son. Also put a ring on his finger and shoes on his
feet! 23 And bring the calf that we have fattened for a special occasion and kill it, so that we
can eat it and celebrate! 24 We need to celebrate because this son of mine was like a dead man,

but he is now alive again! He was like a lost person, but we have found him again!' So they all began to celebrate.

25 **While all that was happening,** the father's older son was out working in the fields. **After he finished working,** he headed home. As he was getting close to the house, he heard people playing music and dancing. **26** He called for one of the servants and asked what was happening. **27** The servant said to him, 'Your brother has come home. Your father told us to kill the fattened calf to celebrate because your brother returned safe and healthy.' **28** But the older brother was angry and did not want to join the celebration. So his father came out and pleaded with him to come in. **29** But he replied to his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have worked as hard as a slave for you. I have always obeyed everything you told me to do. But you have never given me so much as a young goat that I could use to host a feast for my friends. **30** But now that this son of yours has come back home, after wasting all your money on prostitutes, you have told your servants to kill the fattened calf for a celebration!' **31** But his father said to him, 'My son, you are always with me, and all that I own is yours. **32** But it is right for us to celebrate and rejoice, because it is as though your brother was dead and is alive again! It is as though he was lost and we have him found again!'"

16 **1** Jesus also said to his disciples, "Once there was a rich man who had a household manager. One day someone informed the rich man that the manager was doing such a bad job that the rich man was losing lots of money. **2** So he called the manager to come to him and said to him, 'What I hear you have been doing is terrible! Give me a final written report of the things you have been managing, because you will no longer be my household manager!' **3** Then the manager said to himself, 'My master is going to dismiss me from being his manager, so I have to think of what to do. I am not strong enough to work by digging ditches, and I am ashamed to beg for money. **4** I know what I will do so that people will take me into their houses **and provide for me** after he dismisses me from my management work!' **5** So he asked everyone who owed his master money to come to him one by one. He asked the first one, 'How much do you owe my master?' **6** The man replied, '3,000 liters of olive oil.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down, and quickly change it to 1,500 liters!' **7** He said to another man, 'How much do you owe?' The man replied, '1,000 baskets of wheat.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill and change it to 800 baskets!' **8** **When** the master **heard**

what his manager had done, he praised the dishonest manager for being so clever. The truth is, the people who belong to this world are more clever than the people who belong to God in how they relate to those around them. 9 I tell you, use the money you have in this world to make friends for yourselves. Then when that money is gone, those friends will welcome you into their homes, which will last forever. 10 People who faithfully manage small amounts of money will also be honest with much greater amounts. People who are dishonest in the way they manage small amounts of money will also be dishonest with much greater amounts. 11 So if you have not faithfully handled the money God has given you in this world, he will certainly not trust you with the true riches of heaven. 12 If you have not faithfully managed property that belongs to other people, you should not expect anyone to give you property of your own.
13 No servant is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. You cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life to acquiring money and other material possessions."

14 When the Pharisees who were there heard what Jesus was teaching, they made fun of him because they loved to acquire money. 15 But Jesus said to them, "You try to make other people think that you are righteous, but God knows what you are really like. Keep in mind that God considers to be detestable many things that people praise as very important.

16 The laws that God gave Moses and the things that the prophets wrote were in effect until John the Baptizer came. Since then, I have been preaching the good news about how God will rule as king. Many people are accepting my message and are very eagerly trying to become part of the kingdom of God. 17 All of God's laws, even those that seem insignificant, are more permanent than heaven and earth.

18 Any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, and any man who marries a woman whose husband has divorced her is also committing adultery."

19 Jesus also said, "Once there was a rich man who wore expensive purple and linen clothes. Every day he gave lavish feasts. 20 And every day people laid a poor man whose name was Lazarus at the gate of the rich man's house. Lazarus' body was covered with sores. 21 He was so hungry that he wanted to eat the scraps of food that fell from the table where the rich man ate. While he was lying there, dogs came and licked his sores. 22 Eventually the poor man

died. Then the angels took him to be with his ancestor Abraham. The rich man also died, and people buried his body. **23** In the place of the dead, the rich man was suffering great pain. He looked up and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus sitting very close to Abraham. **24** So the rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, I am suffering very much in this fire! So please pity me and send Lazarus here so that he can dip his finger in water and touch my tongue to cool it!' **25** But Abraham replied, 'Child, remember that while you were alive on earth you enjoyed many good things. But Lazarus was miserable. Now he is happy here, and you are suffering. **26** Besides that, God has placed a huge ravine between you and us. So those who want to go from here to you there are not able to. Furthermore, no one can cross from there to where we are, either.' **27** Then the rich man said, 'If that is so, Father Abraham, I ask you to send Lazarus to my family home. **28** I have five brothers who live there. Tell him to warn them so that they do not also come to this place where we suffer great pain!' **29** But Abraham replied, 'No, I will not do that because your brothers have what Moses and the prophets wrote long ago. They should obey what they wrote!' **30** But the rich man replied, 'No, Father Abraham, that will not be enough! But if someone from those who have died goes back to them and warns them, they will turn from their sinful behavior.' **31** Abraham said to him, 'So they would not obey what Moses and the prophets wrote. Then it would not help even if someone from among the people who have died went and warned them. They would still not believe that they should turn from their sinful behavior.'"

17 **1** Jesus said to his disciples, "Things that tempt people to sin will certainly happen. But how terrible it will be for anyone who causes those things to happen! **2** It would be better for that person if someone fastened a huge stone around his neck and threw him into the sea than if he were to cause someone to sin whose faith was weak. **3** Be careful how you act. If another believer sins, you should rebuke him. If he says that he is sorry for having sinned and asks you to forgive him, then you should forgive him. **4** Even if he sins against you seven times in one day, if he comes to you each time and says, 'I am sorry for what I did,' you must continue forgiving him."

5 Then the representatives said to Jesus, "Give us more faith!" **6** Jesus replied, "Even if you had faith that was no bigger than this tiny mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry

tree, ‘Pull yourself out of the ground, roots and all, and plant yourself in the sea,’ and it would obey you!”

7 Jesus also said, “Suppose that one of you had a servant who was plowing your fields or taking care of your sheep. After he came into the house from the field, you would not say, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat!’ 8 Instead, you would say to him, ‘Prepare a meal for me! Then put on your serving clothes and serve it to me so that I can eat and drink! Afterwards you can eat and drink.’ 9 You would not thank your servant just for doing the work that he had been told to do! 10 Similarly, when you have done everything that God has told you to do, you should say, ‘We are only God’s servants. We do not deserve to have you thank us. We have only done the things that he told us to do.’”

11 As Jesus and his disciples were walking along the road to Jerusalem, they were going through the area between the regions of Samaria and Galilee. 12 As Jesus entered a village, ten lepers came toward him, but they stood at some distance away. 13 They called out, “Jesus, Master, please have pity on us!” 14 When Jesus saw them, he said to them, “Go and have the priests examine you.” So they went, and on the way, their leprosy disappeared. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he no longer had leprosy, went back, praising God loudly. 16 He came to Jesus and he lay down on the ground with his face at Jesus’ feet, and he thanked him. This man was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus said, “I healed ten lepers! I would have expected the other nine to come back as well! 18 This foreign man was the only one who returned to thank God. None of the others came back!” 19 Then he said to the man, “Get up and go on your way. God has healed you because you trusted in me.”

20 One day some Pharisees asked Jesus, “When will God begin to rule everyone?” He replied, “That will not happen with signs that people can recognize if they watch for them. 21 People will not be able to say, ‘Look! God is ruling here!’ or ‘God is ruling there!’ Contrary to what you think, God has already begun to rule within you.”

22 Jesus said to his disciples, “There will be a time when you will want to see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully. But you will not see that. 23 People will say to you, ‘Look, the Messiah is over there!’ or they will say, ‘Look, he is here!’ When they say that, do not follow them. 24 For when the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other,

everyone can see it. Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, come back again, everyone will see me.
25 But before that happens, I must suffer in many ways, and people will reject me. 26 But
when I, the Son of Man, come again, people will be doing things just like people were doing at
the time when Noah lived. 27 At that time people ate and drank as usual, and they got married
as usual, up until the day when Noah and his family entered the big boat. But then the flood
came and destroyed all those who were not in the boat. 28 Similarly, when Lot lived in the city
of Sodom, people there ate and drank as usual. They bought things and they sold things. They
planted crops and they built houses as usual. 29 But on the day that Lot left Sodom, fire and
burning sulfur came down from the sky and destroyed all those who had stayed in the city.
30 Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return to earth, people will be unprepared. 31 On that
day, those who are outside their houses, with all the things that they own inside the houses,
must not take the time to go inside and get them. Similarly, those who are out working in a
field must not come back home to get anything. They must flee quickly. 32 Remember what
happened to Lot's wife! 33 Anyone who continues in his own way of living will die. But
anyone who leaves his old way of living for my sake will live forever. 34 I tell you this: On the
night when I return, there will be two people sleeping in one bed. God will take the one who
believes in me and leave the other one behind. 35 Two women will be grinding grain together.
God will take one of them and leave the other one behind." 36 4 ["There will be two in the
field; one will be taken and the other left."] 37 His disciples said to him, "Lord, where will this
happen?" He replied to them, "Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather to eat
it."

18 1 Jesus told his disciples another story to teach them that they should pray continually
and not become discouraged if God did not immediately answer their prayers. 2 He said, "In a
certain city there was a judge who did not revere God and did not care about people. 3 There
was a widow in that city who kept coming to that judge, saying, 'Please get justice for me
against the man who is opposing me in court.' 4 For a long time the judge refused to help her.
But later, he said to himself, 'I do not revere God and I do not care about people. 5 But this
widow keeps bothering me! So I will judge her case and make sure she is treated fairly. I am
concerned that if I do not do that, she will exhaust me by continually coming to me!'" 6 Then
Jesus said, "Think carefully about what the unjust judge said. 7 Even more certainly will God,

who is just, bring about justice for his chosen people, who pray earnestly to him all day long! And he is always patient with them. 8 I tell you, God will quickly bring about justice for his chosen ones! Nevertheless when I, the Son of Man, come back to earth, there will still be many people who do not believe in me."

9 Then Jesus also told the following story to some people who thought they were righteous and who looked down on other people. 10 He said, "Two men went up to the temple in Jerusalem to pray. One of the men was a Pharisee. The other man was someone who collected taxes from the people for the Roman government. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself in this way, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like other people. Some steal money from others. Some treat others unjustly. Some commit adultery. I do not do any of those things. And I am certainly not like this sinful tax collector who cheats people! 12 I fast on two days during every week, and I give ten percent of all that I earn to the temple!' 13 But the tax collector stood far away from the other people in the temple courtyard. He would not even look up toward heaven. Instead, he beat on his chest and said, 'O God, please forgive me, because I am a terrible sinner!'" 14 Then Jesus said, "I tell you that as they left to go home, God had forgiven the tax collector, but God had not forgiven the Pharisee. This is because God will humble everyone who exalts himself, and God will exalt everyone who humbles himself."

15 One day people were bringing even their babies to Jesus so that he would put his hands on them and bless them. When the disciples saw this, they told them not to do that. 16 But Jesus called for the children to be brought to him. He said, "Let the little children come to me! Do not stop them, because it is humble and trusting people like these children who let God rule their lives. 17 Indeed, I say to you that whoever will not humbly and trustingly let God rule over his life will not accept God's rule at all."

18 Once a Jewish leader asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do in order to have everlasting life?" 19 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? God is the only one who is truly good!

20 In answer to your question, certainly you know the commandments that God gave to Moses for us to obey: 'Do not commit adultery. Do not murder anyone. Do not steal. Do not give a false report. Honor your father and mother.'" 21 The man said, "I have obeyed all those

commandments ever since I was young.” **22** When Jesus heard him say that, he replied to him, “You still need to do one more thing. Sell all that you own. Then give the money to people who have very little to live on. The result will be that you will have spiritual riches in heaven. Then come and be my disciple!” **23** The man became very sad when he heard that, because he was extremely rich. **24** When Jesus looked at the man and said, “It is very difficult for those who are wealthy to let God rule over them. **25** In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich people to let God rule their lives.” **26** Those who heard Jesus say that replied, “Then it seems that God will not consider that anyone should have eternal life!” **27** But Jesus said, “What is impossible for people is possible for God.” **28** Then Peter said, “What about us? We have left everything we had in order to become your disciples.” **29** Jesus said to them, “I can assure you that those who have left their homes, their wives, their brothers, their parents, or their children in order to let God rule over them **30** will receive in this life many times as much as they left behind and, in the coming age, they will receive everlasting life.”

31 Jesus took his 12 representatives to a place by themselves. He said to them, “Listen carefully! We are on our way to Jerusalem. While we are there, everything that the prophets wrote long ago about me, the Son of Man, will happen. **32** This will happen when my enemies turn me over to the authorities who are not Jews. They will mock me, treat me with disdain, and spit on me. **33** They will whip me and then they will kill me. But two days later I will become alive again.” **34** But the disciples did not understand any of those things that he said. God prevented them from recognizing their significance, so they did not know what Jesus meant by what he was telling them.

35 As Jesus and his disciples came near to the city of Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road. He was begging for money. **36** When he heard a crowd of people passing by, he kept asking **those around him**, “What is happening?” **37** They told him, “**There is a crowd because** Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, is coming down the street.” **38** He shouted, “Jesus, you who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” **39** Those who were walking at the front of the crowd scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, “You who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” **40** Jesus stopped walking and commanded the people to bring the man to him. When the blind man came near,

Jesus asked him, [41] "What do you want me to do for you?" He replied, "Lord, I want you to enable me to see!" [42] Jesus said to him, "Then I now restore your sight! Because you have trusted in me, I have healed you!" [43] Immediately he was able to see. And he went with Jesus, praising God. And when all the people there saw this, they also praised God.

19 [1] Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the city. [2] There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was in charge of collecting taxes, and he was very rich. [3] He wanted to see Jesus, but he could not see him over the crowd. He was a very short man **and there were many people around Jesus**. [4] So he ran farther down the road. He climbed a sycamore fig tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. [5] When Jesus got there, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, I have to stay at your house tonight!" [6] So he came down quickly. He was glad to welcome Jesus into his home. [7] But the people who saw Jesus go there grumbled, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a real sinner!" [8] Then Zacchaeus stood up while they were eating and said to Jesus, "Lord, I want you to know that I am going to give half of what I own to poor people. And as for the people whom I have cheated, I will pay them back four times the amount I took from them." [9] Jesus said to him, "Today God has saved this household, because this man has shown that he is a true descendant of Abraham. [10] Remember this: I, the Son of Man, came to find and save people **like you** who have been disobeying God."

[11] The people were listening to everything Jesus said. He was getting close to Jerusalem**, and he knew that the people had a wrong idea**. They thought he would begin to rule as king over God's people as soon as he got to Jerusalem. So Jesus decided to tell them another story **to correct that idea**. [12] He said, "A prince was preparing to go to a distant country so that a higher king could give him the right to rule over the country where he lived. After he received it, he would come back to rule his people. [13] **Before he left,** he summoned ten of his servants. He gave each of them an equal amount of money. He said to them, 'Do business with this money until I return!' **Then he left.** [14] But many people of his country hated him. So they sent some messengers to follow him and say **to the higher king**, 'We do not want this man to be our king!' [15] **But he was made king anyway. Later** he returned as the new king. Then he called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had gained by doing business with the money he had given them. [16] The first servant came to him and said,

‘Sir, with your money I have earned ten times as much!’ **17** He said to this man, ‘You are a good servant! You have done very well! Because you have faithfully taken care of a small amount of money, I will give you ten cities to rule over.’ **18** Then the second servant came and said, ‘Sir, the money you gave me is now worth five times as much!’ **19** He also said to that servant, ‘**Well done!** I will put you over five cities.’ **20** Then another servant came. He said, ‘Sir, here is your money. I wrapped it up in a cloth and hid it to keep it safe. **21** I was afraid that you would take everything I earned. I know you are a hard man who takes things from others that do not really belong to you. You are like a farmer who harvests grain that another farmer has planted.’ **22** He said to that servant, ‘You wicked servant! I will condemn you by the words you just said. You said I am a hard man. You said I take what does not belong to me. You said I am like a farmer who harvests what another farmer has planted. **23** So you should at least have given my money to money lenders! Then when I returned I could have collected that amount plus the interest it would have earned!’ **24** Then the king said to those who were standing near, ‘Take the money from him and give it to the servant who made ten times as much!’ **25** They protested, ‘But sir, he already has a lot of money!’ **26** But the king said, ‘I tell you this: To the people who use well what they have received, I will give even more. But from the people who do not use well what they have received, I will take away even what they already have. **27** Now, as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and execute them while I am watching!’”

28 After Jesus said those things, he traveled farther along on the road up to Jerusalem. **29** When they got close to the villages of Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples on ahead. **30** He told them, “Go to the village just ahead of you. As you enter it, there you will see a young donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. **31** If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying the donkey?’ say to him, ‘Jesus needs it.’” **32** So the two disciples went to the village and found the donkey, just as Jesus had told them. **33** As they were untying it, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying our donkey?” **34** They replied, “Jesus needs it.” And the owners gave them permission to use it. **35** Then the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus. They threw their robes on the donkey’s back and helped Jesus get on it. **36** Then, as he rode along, others spread their robes on the road in front of him to honor him. **37** As Jesus approached the road that goes down from the

Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of his disciples began to praise God with loud, joyful shouts for all the great miracles that they had seen him do. **38** They were saying things like, "May God bless our king who comes with God's authority! May there be peace between God in heaven and us his people, and may everyone praise God!" **39** Some of the Pharisees who were in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell your disciples to stop saying those things!" **40** He replied, "I tell you this: If these people were silent, the stones themselves would shout to praise me!"

41 When Jesus came near to Jerusalem and saw the city, he cried about its people. **42** He said, "I wish that today you people knew how to have God's peace. But now you are unable to know this. **43** I want you to know this: You are going to experience difficult times. Your enemies will come and set up a barricade around your city. They will surround the city and attack it on all sides. **44** They will **break through the walls and** destroy them and the rest of the city. They will kill all of you. They will completely demolish everything. All this will happen because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you!"

45 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courtyard. He began to force the people who were selling things there to leave. **46** He told them, "The Scriptures say, 'God's temple should be a place where people pray.' But you have made it 'a hideout for thieves'!"

47 Each day during that week, Jesus was teaching people at the temple. The chief priests, the teachers of religious laws, and other Jewish leaders were trying to find a way to kill him. **48** But they did not find any way to do it, because very many people were eager to hear him.

20 **1** One day during that week, Jesus was teaching the people at the temple and telling them God's good message. As he was doing that, the chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and some other elders came to him. **2** They said to him, "Tell us, what right do you have to do these things? And who gave you this right?" **3** He replied, "I will also ask you a question. Tell me **4** about John baptizing people: Did God command him to baptize or did humans command him?" **5** They discussed this among themselves. They said, "If we answer, 'God commanded him,' then he will say, 'So why did you not believe him?' **6** But if we say, 'It was only humans who told him to baptize,' the people will stone us to death, because most of them

believe that John was a prophet whom God sent." [7] So they replied that they did not know who told John to baptize. [8] Then Jesus said to them, "Just as you will not tell me, I will not tell you who sent me to do those things."

[9] Then Jesus told the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it. Then he went to another country and stayed there for a long time. [10] When it was time to harvest the grapes, this owner sent a servant to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. He wanted them to give him his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. But after the servant arrived, they beat that servant and sent him away without giving him any grapes. [11] Later, the owner sent another servant, but they also beat and shamed that servant. They sent him away without any grapes. [12] Still later, the owner sent yet another servant. The farmers wounded this servant too and forced him to leave the vineyard. [13] So the owner of the vineyard said to himself, 'What should I do now? I will send my son, whom I love very much. They will probably respect him.' [14] So he sent his son, but when the people who were caring for the vineyard saw him coming, they said to each other, 'Here comes the man who will some day inherit this vineyard! Let us kill him! Then the vineyard will be ours!' [15] So they dragged him outside the vineyard, and they killed him. I will tell you what the owner of the vineyard will do to them! [16] He will come and kill those people who were taking care of the vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it." When the people listening to Jesus heard this, they said, "May a situation like this never happen!" [17] But Jesus looked directly at them and said, "You can say that, but think about the meaning of these words that are written in the Scriptures.

> 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building.

[18] This stone will break to pieces everyone who falls on it, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'"

[19] The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws realized that he was accusing them when he told the story about those wicked people. So they immediately tried to find a way to arrest him. But they did not arrest him, because they were afraid of what the people would do if they did so. [20] So they watched him carefully. They also sent spies to talk to Jesus who pretended to be sincere, but who really wanted to get Jesus to say something wrong. They

wanted to be able to accuse him of encouraging resistance to the Roman government so that they could turn him over to the governor of the province. 21 One of them said to him, “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right. You do that even if important people do not like it. You teach truthfully what God wants us to do. 22 So tell us what you think about this matter. Is it right for us to pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?” 23 But he knew that they were trying to trick him to get him into trouble either with the Jews, who hated to pay those taxes, or with the Roman government. So he said to them, 24 “Show me a Roman coin. Then tell me whose picture and name are on it.” So they showed him a coin and said, “It has the picture and name of Caesar.” 25 He said to them, “In that case, give to the government what belongs to it, and give to God what belongs to him.” 26 The spies could find nothing wrong with anything that Jesus said while the people were standing around him. The spies were so amazed at his answer that they did not say anything more.

27 After that, some Sadducees came to Jesus. Their group of Jews taught that no one would rise from the dead. They also intended to ask Jesus a challenging question. 28 One of them said to him, “Teacher, Moses taught us Jews what to do if a man dies who has a wife but no children. His brother should marry the widow so that she can have a child by him. People will then consider that child a descendant of the man who died. 29 Well, there were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman, but before she had any children, he died, leaving her as a widow. 30 The second brother followed this law and married the widow, but the same thing happened to him. 31 Then the third brother married her, but the same thing happened again. In the end, all seven brothers, one by one, married that woman but died without having any children. 32 Afterwards, the woman died, too. 33 Therefore, if it is true that there will be a time when people who have died will become alive again, whose wife do you think that woman will be then? Keep in mind that she was married to all seven brothers!” 34 Jesus replied to them, “In this world, men marry women, and parents give daughters in marriage to men. 35 But the people whom God will consider worthy of being in heaven when he brings them back to life after they have died will not marry. 36 They do not marry because they cannot die anymore. Rather, they are like the angels who live forever. They are God’s children, since God has made them alive again after they have died. 37 Now that I have answered your question about marriage, I will show from Scripture that God does make people alive again after they have died. Even Moses wrote about this. In the place where he describes

meeting God at the burning bush, he records how the Lord called himself 'the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' God would not have said that if he had not made those men alive again and he were not still their God. **38** After all, he is not the God of people who are dead. He is the God of people who are alive, because to God, everyone remains alive even after they die."

39 Some of the teachers of the Jewish law who were there replied, "Teacher, you have answered very well!" **40** The scribes said this because the people who had been trying to trap Jesus had stopped asking him difficult questions. He had answered so well that they were afraid to ask him anything else.

41 So in return, Jesus asked them a difficult question of his own. He said, "Why do people say that the Messiah is only a descendant of King David? **42** Consider that David himself wrote in the Book of Psalms about the Messiah,

'God said to my Lord,
"Sit here next to me on my right side, in that position of great honor.
43 Sit here while I completely defeat your enemies."'

44 In this psalm, King David calls the Messiah 'my Lord.' That is a title of great respect. So how could the Messiah be David's descendant? It is the descendant who should show great respect to the ancestor."

45 Then, while all the other people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, **46** "Make sure that you do not act like the men who teach our Jewish laws. They like to put on long robes and walk around to make people think that they are very important. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. They like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues. At dinner parties they like to sit in the places for the most honored people.
47 They also steal all the property of widows. But to make other people think that they are righteous, they pray for a long time in public. God will condemn them strictly for what they have done."

21 **1** Then Jesus looked up from where he was sitting and saw rich people putting their gifts of money into the offering boxes in the temple courtyard. **2** He also saw a poor widow put two

small copper coins into one of the boxes. 3 And he said to his disciples, “The truth is that this
poor widow has put more into the offering box than all of these rich people. 4 Let me tell you
why that is true. All those rich people gave a lot of money, but it was extra money that they did
not really need. But this widow, who is very poor, gave all the money that she had, even
though she really did need it to live on.”

5 Some of Jesus’ disciples were talking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful
stones and decorations that people had given. But Jesus said, 6 “Let me tell you what is going to
happen to these things that you are admiring. Someday your enemies will demolish them
entirely.”

7 Then they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will show that
these things are about to take place?” 8 Jesus replied, “Do not let anyone mislead you. For
many people will come and each will claim to be me. Each will say about himself, ‘I am the
Messiah!’ They will also say, ‘The time is almost here when God will rule as king!’ Do not
believe what they are saying! 9 Also, you will hear about wars and people fighting each other.
Things like that must happen before the end of the world comes. So when you hear about those
things, do not be afraid.

10 Various people groups will attack each other, and the people of different kingdoms will
fight each other. 11 And in various places there will be great earthquakes. There will also be
famines and terrible diseases. Many things will happen that will cause people to be very afraid.
People will see strange things in the sky that will show that something very important is going to
happen. 12 But before all these things happen, your enemies will seize you and treat you badly.
They will bring you to the synagogues, whose judges will put you on trial and put you in the
prisons. Your enemies will also have kings and high government authorities put you on trial
because you believe in me. 13 That will be a time for you to tell them the truth about me.
14 So resolve firmly not to worry ahead of time about what you will say to defend yourselves,
15 because I will give you the right words so that you will know what to say. As a result, none
of the people accusing you will be able to say that you are wrong. 16 And even your parents
and brothers and sisters and other relatives and friends will betray you, and they will kill some
of you. 17 Most people will hate you because you believe in me. 18 But your entire being will

be safe spiritually. 19 If you go through difficult times and prove that you trust God, after you die your souls will live on in God's presence.

20 When you see armies surround the city of Jerusalem, then you will know that they will soon destroy that city. 21 At that time those of you who are in other places in the province of Judea must escape to the mountains. And those of you who are in this city must leave. Those of you who are in the nearby countryside must not come into the city. 22 You should run away because God will punish the city of Jerusalem at this time. When he does that, what God has said in the Scriptures about this will come true. 23 When this happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for those who are nursing their babies. There will be great suffering in the land. God will be angry with these people and punish them severely. 24 Many of them will die because soldiers will kill them with their weapons. Their enemies will take others as prisoners and send them to many places around the world. The Gentiles will control the city of Jerusalem for as long as God allows."

25 "At this time, strange things will happen to the sun, the moon, and the stars. And on earth, people groups will become very frightened. They will be as afraid as they would be in a roaring ocean with huge waves. 26 People will be so afraid that they will faint because they are waiting for what will happen next in the world. The stars in the sky will move out of their usual places. 27 Then all people will see me, the Son of Man, coming in the clouds powerfully and with brilliant light. 28 So when those terrible things begin to happen, assume a posture of confidence, because God will soon rescue you."

29 Then Jesus gave them an example. He said, "Think about the fig trees, and even all the trees. 30 When you see that their leaves are sprouting, you know that it is the beginning of summer. 31 In the same way, when you see these things that I have just described happening, you will know then that God will soon show himself as king. 32 I am telling you the truth. The people who see the first of the signs I have described will definitely live to see all these things happen. 33 You may think of the sky and the land as permanent. They are not, but my words are permanent.

34 Be very careful to control yourselves. If you get drunk, your minds will not be alert afterwards. And if you worry about day-to-day matters, you will become distracted. Then you

will not be paying attention to the signs I have told you about, and I will surprise you when I return. 35 I will come so suddenly that it will be like when a trap springs closed on an animal. So you need to be watching for my return, because it will affect every person in the world. 36 So you must be always ready for my coming. Pray that you will be able to stay faithful to me as you experience these difficult things that I have been talking about. That way I, the Messiah, will declare you innocent when I come to judge the world."

37 Each day Jesus was teaching people at the temple. But every evening he went out of the city and stayed all night on the Mount of Olives. 38 And early every morning, great crowds of people came to the temple to listen to him as he taught.

22 1 It was now almost time for the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, which people also called the Passover. 2 The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws were looking for a way to have Jesus killed without starting a riot among the many people who thought he was a great man.

3 Then Satan entered into Judas, whose other name was Iscariot. He was one of 12 men whom Jesus had chosen to represent him. 4 He went and talked with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard about how he might help them capture Jesus. 5 They were very pleased when he offered to do that. They said they would pay him money if he did it. 6 So Judas agreed, and then he started looking for a way to help them capture Jesus where the crowd would not see it.

7 Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came. This was the day when Jewish people had to kill the lambs that they would eat for the Passover celebration. 8 So Jesus sent Peter and John out with these instructions: "Go and prepare the meal for the Passover celebration so that we can all eat it together." 9 They replied to him, "Where do you want us to prepare the meal?" 10 He answered, "Listen carefully. When you go into the city, a man carrying a large jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters. 11 Say to the owner of the house, 'Our teacher says to show us the room where he can eat the Passover meal together with us, his disciples.' 12 He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be all ready for entertaining guests. Prepare the meal for us there." 13 So the two disciples

went into the city. They found everything to be just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the meal for the Passover celebration there.

14 When it was time to eat the meal, Jesus came and sat down with his representatives.
15 He said to them, “I have wanted very much to eat this special Passover supper with you
before I die. 16 I tell you, the next time I eat it will be when God gives it its deepest meaning
when he rules everywhere as king.” 17 Then he took a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He
told them, “Take this wine and share it among yourselves. 18 I want you to do this because, I
tell you, I will not drink wine again until God rules everywhere as king.” 19 Then he took
some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces and gave it to them to eat. As he did
so, he said, “This bread is my body, which I am about to sacrifice for you. Do this again later
to honor me.” 20 In the same way, after they had eaten the meal, he took the cup of wine and
said, “This is the new covenant that I will make using my own blood, which will flow out of
my wounds for you when I die. 21 But I want you all to know that the person who will hand
me over to my enemies is here eating with me. 22 I say this because I, the Son of Man, will
indeed die in the way that God has planned. But how terrible it will be for the man who hands
me over to my enemies!” 23 Then they all began to ask each other which of them would
actually be prepared to betray Jesus.

24 After that, they began to argue among themselves about which one of them they should
think was the most important person. 25 Jesus responded to them, “The kings of the Gentile
nations like to show people that they are powerful. Yet they give themselves the name ‘Ones
Who Help the People.’ 26 But you should not be like those rulers! Instead, the most honored
people among you should act as if they were the least honored ones. Anyone who leads must
act like a servant. 27 For you know that the important person is the one who eats at the table,
not the servant who brings the food. But I, your leader, have been setting an example for you
by serving you while I have been among you

28 You are the people who have stayed with me during all the hard things I have suffered.
29 So now I am appointing you to important positions in which you will rule, just as my Father
has appointed me to rule as a king. 30 You will sit and eat and drink with me when I become
king. In fact, you will sit on thrones and judge the people of the 12 tribes of Israel.”

31 "Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has asked God to let him test all of you, the way someone shakes grain in a sieve, and God has permitted him to do that. **32** But I have prayed for you, Simon. I have asked God that you will not completely stop believing in me. So when you decide that you truly do believe in me, encourage the others to believe in me as well." **33** Peter replied to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison. I am even willing to die with you!" **34** Jesus replied, "Peter, I want you to know that this night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!"

35 Then Jesus asked the disciples, "When I sent you out to the villages, and you went without any money, food, or sandals, was there anything you needed but could not get?" They replied, "No, there was nothing!" **36** Then Jesus said, "But, now, if anyone among you has some money, he should take it with him. Also, whoever has food should take it with him. And whoever does not have a sword should sell his coat and buy one! **37** I tell you this because what a prophet wrote about me in the Scriptures must take place: 'People treated him like a criminal.' Everything the Scriptures say about me is going to happen." **38** The disciples replied, "Lord, look! We have two swords!" He answered, "We will not need more than two."

39 Jesus left the city and went to the Mount of Olives, as he usually did. His disciples went with him. **40** When Jesus came with his disciples to the place where he often spent the night, he said to them, "Pray that God will help you not to sin when you are tempted." **41** Then he went about 30 meters from them, knelt down, and prayed. **42** He said, "Father, if you are willing, please allow me not to experience the terrible things that are about to happen. But do not do what I want. Do what you want." **43** 5 [Then an angel from heaven came to him and gave him courage. **44** 6 He was suffering greatly. So he prayed very intensely. His sweat was falling to the ground like large drops of blood.] **45** When Jesus got up from praying, he returned to his disciples. He discovered that they were sleeping. They were very sad and this had made them tired. **46** He woke them up and said to them, "This is no time for you to be sleeping! Get up! Pray that God will help you so that nothing tempts you to sin."

47 While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd of people came to him. Judas, one of Jesus' 12 representatives, was guiding them. He came up to Jesus to greet him with a kiss on the cheek. **48** But Jesus said to him, "Judas, how dare you use a kiss to hand me, the Son of Man, over to

my enemies!” 49 When the disciples realized what was happening, they said, “Lord, should we use our weapons to keep them from arresting you?” 50 One of them drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, but only cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus said, “Do not do any more of that!” Then he touched the servant where he had been wounded and healed him.
52-53 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guards, and the Jewish elders who had come to arrest him, “It is surprising that you have come here with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a robber. For many days I was with you in the temple, but you did not try to arrest me at all! But this is the time you are doing what you want. It is also the time when Satan is doing the evil things as he wants to do.”

54 The Jewish leaders and soldiers seized Jesus and led him away. They brought him to the high priest’s house. Peter followed them from a safe distance far behind. 55 Some people lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together. Peter came and sat among them.
56 A female servant saw Peter sitting there as the fire shone upon him. She looked at him carefully and said, “This man was also with the one they have arrested!” 57 But he denied it, saying, “Young lady, I do not know him!” 58 A little later someone else saw Peter and said, “You also are one of those who were with the man they arrested!” But Peter said, “No, mister, I am not one of them!” 59 About an hour later someone else said loudly, “The way that this man speaks shows that he is from the region of Galilee. So he must certainly have come here with the man they arrested!” 60 But Peter said, “Mister, that is not true!” Immediately a rooster crowed, while Peter was still speaking. 61 Jesus turned around and looked right at Peter. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him: “This night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you know me.” 62 And he went out of the courtyard and cried with great sorrow.

63 The men who were guarding Jesus made fun of him and beat him. 64 They put a blindfold on him so he could not see and then took turns hitting him. They said to him, “Show us that you are a prophet! Tell us who just hit you!” 65 They said many other cruel things about him, mocking him.

66 At dawn the next morning, many of the Jewish leaders gathered together. In this group were the chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws. They had the soldiers bring Jesus into the Jewish council chamber. 67 There they said to him, “If you are the Messiah, tell

us!” But he replied, “If I say that I am the Messiah, you will not believe me. 68 But if I ask
you whether you think I am the Messiah, you will not answer me. 69 But from now on, I, the
Messiah, will be sitting next to almighty God and ruling!” 70 Then they all asked, “If that is
so, are you saying that you are the Son of God?” He answered, “Yes, what you are saying is
true.” 71 Then they said to each other, “We ourselves have heard him say that he is equal to
God! And so we certainly do not need any more people to testify against him on a charge of
blasphemy!”

23 1 Then the whole group got up and took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. 2 They
accused him in front of Pilate. They said, “We have seen this man causing trouble by misleading
our people. He has been telling them to not pay the taxes that Caesar, the Roman emperor, has
imposed. Also, he has been saying that he is the Messiah, a king!” 3 Pilate then asked him,
“Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “Yes, it is just as you have asked me.” 4 Then
Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowd, “This man is not guilty of any crime.” 5 But
the group from the Jewish ruling council kept accusing Jesus. They said, “He is trying to get
the people to riot! He has been teaching his ideas throughout all of the region of Judea. He
started doing that in the region of Galilee, and now he is doing it here as well!”

6 When Pilate heard what they said, he asked, “Does this man come from the region of
Galilee?” 7 When Pilate found out that Jesus was from Galilee, where Herod Antipas ruled, he
sent Jesus to him. Herod was also in Jerusalem at that time. 8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was
very glad, because he had wanted to see Jesus for a long time. This was because Herod had
heard many things about Jesus, and he wanted to see him perform a miracle. 9 So he asked
Jesus many questions, but Jesus did not reply to any of them. 10 And the chief priests and
some experts in the Jewish laws stood near Jesus, accusing him very strongly of committing
many crimes. 11 Then Herod and his soldiers insulted Jesus and made fun of him. They put
expensive clothes on him to pretend that he was a king. Then Herod sent him back to Pilate.
12 Until that time the two men had been very hostile to each other, but on that day Herod and
Pilate became friends.

13 Pilate then gathered together the chief priests and other Jewish leaders and the crowd
that was still there. 14 He said to them, “You brought this man to me, saying that he has been

leading the people to revolt. But I want you to know that after examining him while you were listening, I conclude that he is not guilty of doing any of the things you said he did. **15** Also, Herod sent him back to us **without punishing him**. That means that he too **concluded that he was not guilty**. So it is clear that this man has not done anything for which he deserves to die. **16** So I will **tell my soldiers to** whip him and then set him free." **17** 7 [**Pilate said this because** he had to set one prisoner free at every Passover celebration.] **18** But the whole crowd shouted together, "Put this man to death! Set Barabbas free for us instead!" **19** Now Barabbas was a man who had led some people in the city **of Jerusalem** to rebel against the Roman government. He was also a murderer. He was in prison because of these crimes. **20** But Pilate wanted very much to set Jesus free, so he tried to speak to the crowd again. **21** But they kept on shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" **22** Pilate then spoke to the crowd a third time. "No! He has not committed any crime! He has not done anything for which he deserves to die. So I will have my soldiers whip him, and then I will set him free." **23** But the people in the crowd kept shouting to insist that Pilate execute Jesus on a cross. Finally, because they continued to shout so loudly, they persuaded Pilate. **24** So Pilate declared that he would do what they wanted. **25** Then Pilate set free the man whom the crowd was asking him to release. That man was in prison because he had fought against the government and murdered people! Pilate then commanded the soldiers to take Jesus and do what the crowd wanted.

26 Now there was a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene **in Africa**. He was coming into Jerusalem from the countryside. As the soldiers were leading Jesus away, they grabbed hold of Simon. They **took from Jesus the cross that they had made him carry, and they** put it on Simon's shoulders. They told him to carry it and follow behind Jesus. **27** Now a large crowd was walking behind Jesus. In the crowd were many women who were beating on their chests **to show their grief** and wailing **sorrowfully** for him. **28** But **instead of accepting their sympathy,** Jesus turned to these women and said, "You women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me! Instead, weep over **the terrible things that are going to happen to** you and your children! **29** For I want you to know that there will **soon** be a time when people will say, 'How fortunate are the women who have never given birth to children or nursed babies!' **30** Then the people in this city will say, 'We wish that the mountains would fall on top of us and that the hills would cover us up!' **31** Right now it is difficult for people to do bad things to others, just as it is

difficult to set fire to fresh wood. But later, people will easily be able to do terrible things to others, just as it is easy to set fire to dry wood."

32 Two other men, who were criminals, were also walking with Jesus to the place where the Romans would execute them. **33** When they got to the place whose name was The Skull, there the soldiers crucified Jesus, nailing him to a cross. They did the same thing to the two criminals. They put one of them at the right side of Jesus and the other at his left side. **34** 8 [But Jesus said, "Father, please forgive these people. They do not realize what they are doing."] Then the soldiers divided his clothes and gambled with something like dice to determine which piece of clothing each one would get. **35** Many people stood nearby, watching. They were making fun of Jesus. The Jewish leaders did the same thing. They said, "He saved other people! If God has really chosen him to be the Messiah, he should save himself!" **36** The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him and offered him some sour wine. **37** They said to him, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" **38** On the cross above his head, the soldiers also fastened a sign that stated, "This is the King of the Jews."

39 One of the criminals who was hanging **on a cross next to Jesus also** insulted him. He said, "If you really were the Messiah, you would save yourself, and you would save us too!" **40** But the other criminal scolded him **for saying that**. He told him, "You should be afraid of God **punishing you**! You are also dying on a cross**, and soon God will judge you**. **41** The two of us deserve **to die**. They are punishing us as we deserve for the evil things that we did. But the man you are insulting did nothing wrong!" **42** Then he said to Jesus, "Jesus, please think about me and treat me well when you begin to rule as king!" **43** Jesus replied, "I want you to know that today you will be with me in paradise!"

44 By then it was about noontime. But it became dark throughout that whole area until three o'clock in the afternoon. **45** There was no light from the sun. And the **thick** curtain **that closed off the Most Holy Place** in the temple split into two pieces. **46** When that happened, Jesus shouted loudly, "Father, I put my spirit into your care!" After he said that, he stopped breathing and died.

47 When the centurion **who was commanding the soldiers** saw what happened, he said, "Indeed, this man did nothing wrong!" What he said honored God. **48** When the crowd of

people who had gathered to see these men die saw what had actually happened, they went back to their homes, hitting their chests to show that they were sorrowful. **49** **But when the rest of the crowd left,** all of Jesus' acquaintances, including the women who had come with him from **the region of** Galilee, kept watching what happened from where they were standing, some distance away.

50 There was a man named Joseph **who lived in Jerusalem**. He was a good and righteous man who was a member of the Jewish Council. **51** But he had not agreed with the other Council members when they decided to kill Jesus and when they planned how to do it. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea. He was waiting expectantly for the time when God would send his king to begin to rule. **52** Joseph went to Pilate and asked Pilate to permit him to take Jesus' body and bury it. **Pilate gave him permission,** **53** So Joseph took Jesus' body down **from the cross**. He wrapped it in a linen cloth. Then he put Jesus' body in a burial chamber that someone had cut into a rock cliff. No one had ever put a body in that chamber before. **54** This happened on the day when the Jewish people got ready for their day of rest. It was soon going to be sunset, the start of the Sabbath. **55** The women who had come with Jesus from **the district of** Galilee followed **Joseph and the men who were with him**. They saw the burial chamber, and they saw how the men laid Jesus' body inside it. **56** Then the women went back to where they were staying in order to prepare spices and ointments **to put on Jesus' body**. However, they stopped working when the Sabbath began, just as the Jewish law required.

24 **1** Very early in the morning on Sunday, those women went to the burial chamber. They brought with them the spices that they had prepared **to put on the body of Jesus**. **2** **When they arrived,** they discovered that somebody had rolled away the stone **that had been closing off the entrance** to the burial chamber. **3** They went into **the burial chamber**, but the body of Jesus was not there! **4** They did not know what to think about that. Then suddenly two men stood by them wearing bright, shining clothes! **5** This made the women very frightened. They bowed down low to the ground. The two men said to them, "You should not be looking for someone who is alive in a place where they bury the bodies of dead people! **6** He is not here. No, he has come back to life! Recall that while he was still with you in Galilee, he said to you, **7** 'They will have to hand me, the Son of Man, over to sinful men. Those men will kill me by nailing me to a cross. But two days later, I will become alive again.'" **8** The women recalled what

Jesus had told them. [9] So they left the burial chamber and went to Jesus' 11 representatives and the other disciples of Jesus and told them what happened. [10] The women who told these things to them were Mary from Magdala village, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who were with them. [11] But they thought this report was foolishness, so they did not believe the women. [12] However, Peter decided **to see whether the story was true**. He ran to the burial chamber. He stooped down **and looked inside**. He saw the linen cloths **in which Jesus' body had been wrapped, but Jesus was not there**. So he left the tomb, puzzling over what had happened.

[13] That same day two of Jesus' disciples were walking to an outlying village named Emmaus. It was about ten kilometers from Jerusalem. [14] They were talking with each other about all the things that had happened **to Jesus**. [15] While they were talking and discussing **those things**, Jesus himself approached them and started walking with them. [16] But God prevented them from realizing that it was Jesus. [17] Jesus said to them, "What have you two been talking about while you were walking?" They stopped, and they had very sad expressions on their faces. [18] But then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person who is visiting Jerusalem who does not know about the events that have happened there in recent days!" [19] He said to them, "What events?" They replied, "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was a prophet. God enabled him to perform great miracles and to teach wonderful messages. Most people thought he was wonderful. [20] But our chief priests and leaders handed him over **to the Roman authorities**. They sentenced him to die, and they killed him by nailing him to a cross. [21] We were hoping that he was the one who would free us Israelites from our enemies! But this does not seem possible now, since three days have passed since the Romans executed him. [22] In spite of this, some women from our group amazed us. Early this morning they went to the chamber **where Jesus was buried**, [23] but the body of Jesus was not there! They came back and told us they had seen some angels in a vision. The angels said that Jesus was alive! [24] Then some of those who were with us **when the women came and said this** went to the burial chamber. They saw that things were exactly as the women had reported. But they did not see Jesus." [25] Then Jesus said to them, "You two foolish men! You are so slow to believe all that the prophets have written about the Messiah! [26] You should certainly have known that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer

all those things and die, and then receive great honor from God!" 27 Then Jesus explained to them all the things that the Scriptures said about himself. He started with what Moses wrote, and then he explained what all the prophets had written.

28 When they had nearly reached the village where the two men were going, it appeared that Jesus was going to keep walking down the road. 29 But they pleaded with him not to do that. They said, "Stay with us tonight, because it is late in the afternoon and it will soon be dark." So he went in to the house to stay with them. 30 When they all sat down to eat, Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and began to give some to the two men. 31 And then God enabled them to recognize him. But immediately he disappeared! 32 They said to each other, "While we were walking along the road and he was talking with us and enabling us to understand the Scriptures, we got so excited inside! It all made sense that the Messiah would have to suffer but then receive great honor." 33 So they left immediately and returned to Jerusalem. There they found Jesus' 11 representatives and some others who had gathered together with them. 34 They told those two men, "It is true that Jesus has become alive again. He has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then those two men told the others what had happened as they were walking along the road. They also told them how they both recognized Jesus as he broke some bread for them.

36 As they were saying that, Jesus himself suddenly appeared among them. He said to them, "May God give you peace!" 37 But they were not peaceful. They were startled and afraid because they thought that they were seeing a ghost! 38 He said to them, "You should not be alarmed! And you should not doubt that I am alive. 39 Look at the wounds in my hands and my feet! That way you can be sure that it is really I myself. Ghosts do not have bodies, as you see that I have, and you can touch me to prove that my body is real." 40 After he said that, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his feet. 41 They were so glad that they could still hardly believe that he was really alive. So he said to them, "Do you have something here that I could eat?" 42 So they gave him a piece of roasted fish. 43 While they were watching, he took it and ate it.

44 Then he said to them, "I will repeat what I told you while I was with you before. God was going to make happen everything that he said about me, the Messiah, throughout all of the

Scriptures.” 45 Then he enabled them to understand the things that the Scriptures said about
him. He said to them, 46 “This is what you can read in the Scriptures: that the Messiah would
suffer and die, but on the third day after that, he would become alive again. 47 The Scriptures
also say that those who believe in the Messiah would go and announce on his behalf that God
will forgive people who stop sinning. I want you to do this, starting here in Jerusalem and
going to every people group in the world. 48 You must tell people that you saw everything
happen to me that the Scriptures said would happen to the Messiah. 49 And I am going to send
the Holy Spirit to you, as my Father promised. But you must stay in this city until God gives
you the power of the Holy Spirit.”

50 Then Jesus led them outside the city until they came near the village of Bethany. There
he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 As he was doing that, he left them and went up to
heaven. 52 After they worshiped him, they returned to Jerusalem very joyfully. 53 Each day
they went to the temple and spent time worshiping God there.

John

1 [1] The Word existed before the universe existed. The Word was with God. The Word also was God. [2] He, the Word, was with God before the universe existed. [3] God made everything through him. God made every single thing in the universe with him. [4] The Word gives eternal life, and that eternal life is God's good and true light that he revealed to humans. [5] God revealed his good and true light to the evil world, and that evil world did not vanquish it.

[6] God sent a man named John who was known as John the Baptizer. [7] He came in order to declare to people about Jesus, who is the light. He declared this so that everyone might trust in the light by means of his testimony. [8] John himself was not that light, but he came in order to tell people about the light. [9] That true light was Jesus, who revealed God's truth and goodness to everyone. He was that light that was coming into the world.

[10] The Word was in the world, and he created the universe. Nevertheless, the people of the world did not recognize him. [11] The Word came to his own people, the Jews, but they rejected him. [12] But to everyone who accepted him and trusted in him he gave the right to become God's children. [13] These children of God were not spiritually born by means of normal human birth, nor by human desire, nor by the desire of their fathers. Rather, they were spiritually born by God.

[14] The Word became a real human being and temporarily lived here where we live. We have seen him display his glorious nature. That is the glorious nature of the Unique Son who came from the Father. He fully possesses God's kind acts and true teachings.

[15] John the Baptizer was telling people about the Word. And he shouted to those around him, "I told you that someone would come after me and that he is much more important than I am because he existed long before me." [16] We know the Word fully possesses God's kind acts and true teachings because all of us have benefited from what he fully possesses, having benefited from one kind act after another. [17] This is because God gave his laws to the Israelites

by Moses. But God's kind acts and true message came into full existence by Jesus the Messiah.
18 No one has ever seen God. But Jesus, the Unique One, is God. He is close to God the
Father, and he himself has revealed the Father.

19 This is what John the Baptizer testified when the Jewish leaders sent some priests and
Levites from the city of Jerusalem in order to ask him, "Who are you?" **20** **At that time** John
emphatically confessed, "I am not the Messiah!" **21** Then they asked him, "**If that is so,** then
who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "No." They asked again, "Are you the Prophet **whom
God said would come**?" John answered, "No." **22** So these priests and Levites asked John once
more, "Who are you? **Tell us** so that we can report **what you say** to those leaders who sent us.
Who do you claim to be?" **23** John told them, "I am the person shouting in the desolate area to
prepare yourselves to receive the Lord when he comes. **I am whom** the prophet Isaiah foretold."

24 These priests and Levites whom the leaders in Jerusalem sent to John were Pharisees.
25 They asked him, "If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, then why are you
baptizing people?" **26** John replied, "I am baptizing people with water, but there is someone
now among you whom you do not know. **27** He follows after me, but I am not important
enough even to untie his sandals."

28 These events occurred at the village of Bethany over **on the east side of** the Jordan River.
That is the place where John was baptizing people.

29 The day after that happened, John saw Jesus coming toward him. Then he said to the
people, "Look! **He is** the Lamb of God! He will sacrifice himself to forgive the sins of the
people in this world. **30** This man is the one about whom I said, 'Someone will come after me
who is more important than I am, because **he existed long** before me.' **31** I did not know who he
was **at first**. Nevertheless, I have been baptizing people with water for the very purpose of
revealing him to the people of Israel."

32 And John declared, "I saw God's Spirit coming down from heaven appearing like a
dove. Then the Spirit remained on Jesus. **33** I did not know who he was **at first**, but God sent
me to baptize **people** with water and told me, 'The man on whom you see my Spirit come down

and remain is the man who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' **34** I have seen this, and I declare to you that this man, Jesus, is the Son of God."

35 The day after that happened, John the Baptizer was again with two of his students. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! He is the Lamb of God!" **37** Then John's two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. **38** When Jesus turned around and saw them coming behind him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi (which means 'teacher' in Jewish Aramaic), where are you lodging?" **39** He replied, "Come with me, and you will see!" So they came and saw where Jesus was lodging. They stayed with him that day because it was getting late. (It was about 4:00 PM)

40 One of those two disciples who had heard what John had said and followed Jesus was Andrew. He was Simon Peter's brother. **41** Andrew first went and found his brother Simon. When he came to him, he said, "We have found the Messiah!" (Messiah is "Christ" in the Greek language.) **42** Andrew took Simon to Jesus. When Jesus looked at Peter, he said, "You are Simon. Your father's name is John. From now on your name will also be Cephas" (which means "rock" in Aramaic and is "Peter" in Greek).

43 The day after that happened Jesus decided to leave that area. He went to the region of Galilee and found a man named Philip. Jesus said to him, "Come be my disciple." **44** Philip was from the city of Bethsaida in Galilee. This is also the city that Andrew and Peter were from. **45** Then Philip went and found Nathaniel. When he came to him, he said, "We have found the Messiah whom Moses wrote about in the law God gave the Israelites and whom the prophets said would come. The Messiah is Jesus. His father's name is Joseph. He is from the town of Nazareth." **46** Nathaniel replied, "From Nazareth? Certainly nothing good can come out of that town!" Philip replied, "Come and see for yourself!" **47** When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching him, he said to him, "Look! Here is an honest Israelite! He never deceives anyone!" **48** Nathaniel asked him, "How do you know what kind of man I am?" Jesus replied, "I saw you before Philip called you, when you were sitting by yourself under the fig tree." **49** Then Nathaniel declared, "Teacher, you must be the Son of God! You are the King of Israel whom we have been waiting for!" **50** Jesus replied, "Do you trust in me just because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see me do things that are much greater than that!" **51** Then Jesus said to him, "I am telling you the truth: Just like the vision your ancestor Jacob long ago

saw, you will see heaven opened up, and you will see God's angels going up and coming down on me, the Son of Man."

2 1 Two days later, there was a wedding in Cana, which is a town in the region of Galilee, and Jesus' mother was there. 2 And someone also invited Jesus and his disciples to the wedding. 3 The hosts served wine to those attending the wedding and they drank all the wine they had. So Jesus' mother said to him, "They are out of wine. Please do something about it." 4 Then Jesus said to her, "Madam, what does that have to do with me or you? The chosen time for me to begin my work has not arrived yet." 5 Jesus' mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you to do." 6 (There were six empty stone jars placed there. They held water so that the people could wash themselves according to Jewish religious cleansing laws. Each jar could hold 80 to 120 liters of water.) 7 Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled the jars completely to the top. 8 Then he told them, "Now, take some water out of a jar and bring it to the director of the wedding feast." So the servants did that. 9 Then the director of the feast tasted the water, which had now become wine. (He did not know where the wine had come from, although the servants who had taken out the water knew.) And he called the bridegroom to himself. 10 Then he told the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the best wine first and serves the cheap wine later, when the guests have drunk a lot and can not tell the difference. However, you have saved the best wine until now." 11 That was the first of the miraculous signs that Jesus did. He did it in the town of Cana, which is in the region of Galilee. There he showed how great he is. So his disciples trusted in him.

12 Some time after doing this miracle, Jesus and his mother and brothers, along with his disciples, went down to the town of Capernaum. And they stayed there for a few days.

13 Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went up to the city of Jerusalem. 14 There in the temple courtyard he saw men selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons for those making sacrifices there. He also saw men sitting at tables, exchanging money for temple money. 15 So Jesus made a whip from some braided leather strips, and he used it to drive all those people out from the temple along with the sheep and the cattle. He also scattered the coins of the moneychangers on the ground and flipped their tables over. 16 He told those who were selling pigeons, "Take these pigeons out of here! Do not turn my Father's house into a

marketplace!” **17** This event reminded his disciples about what someone had written in the scriptures long before, “I love your temple so much, O God, that I would die for it.”

18 The Jewish leaders then responded by asking Jesus, “What miracle can you do for us to prove that you have authority from God to do these things that you are doing?” **19** Jesus replied to them, “If you destroy this temple, then in three days I will rebuild it.” **20** So the Jewish leaders said, “It took 46 years to build this temple. Are you saying that you are going to rebuild this entire temple in just three days?” **21** However, the temple Jesus was speaking about was his own body, not the temple building. **22** As a result of this statement, his disciples remembered these things that he had said after God had raised Jesus from the dead. Then they believed both what the scriptures said and what Jesus himself had said.

23 At a later time, when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, during the days of the celebration, many people trusted in him because they saw the miracles he kept on doing. **24** Nevertheless, because Jesus knew what all people were like, he did not trust them. **25** Jesus also did not trust them because he did not need anyone to tell him about mankind. This is because he knew what people think and want.

3 **1** Now there was a man named Nicodemus. He was a member of a strict Jewish religious group called the Pharisees. He was a member of the highest Jewish governing council. **2** He visited Jesus at night. He said to Jesus, “Teacher, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. We know this because no one can do these miracles you are doing unless God is helping him.” **3** Jesus replied to Nicodemus and said, “I am telling you the truth: No one can enter where God rules without being born a second time.” **4** Then Nicodemus said to him, “How can a person be born again when he is old? No one can enter his mother’s womb and be born a second time!” **5** Jesus answered, “I am telling you the truth: no one can enter where God rules unless he is born again by water and the Spirit. **6** If a human being gives birth to a person, that person is a human being. But those who are born again by the work of God’s Spirit have a new spiritual nature that God makes within them. **7** Do not be astonished because I told you that you must be born again. **8** The Holy Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to blow. Although you can hear the sound of the wind, you do not know where the wind came from or where it is going. Just as you do not understand these things, so also you do not

understand everyone who is born again by the work of God's Spirit." [9] Nicodemus answered him, "How is this possible?" [10] Jesus answered him, "You are an important religious teacher among the people of Israel, so you should understand what I am saying! [11] I am telling you the truth: my disciples and I say the things that we know are true, and we are telling you the things that we have witnessed. Yet you people to whom we say these things reject what we are saying. [12] Since you people do not trust what I say when I tell you about things that happen on this earth, you certainly will not trust what I say when I tell you about things that happen in heaven! [13] I, the Son of Man, am the only one who has gone up to heaven, and I am the only one who has come down to earth from heaven. [14] Long ago, when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, Moses lifted up a bronze model of a poisonous snake on a pole, and all who looked up at it were saved from the snakes. In the same way, people must lift me, the Son of Man, up on a cross. [15] They will lift me up so that whoever looks up and trusts in me will live forever with me in heaven.

[16] This is because God loved the world's people in this way, so that he gave his Unique Son in order that anyone who trusts in his Son would not die but would live forever. [17] This is true because God did not send me, his Son, into the world in order to declare the world's people guilty. Rather, God sent me in order to save the world's people by me. [18] God does not declare guilty anyone who trusts in his Son. But God has already declared guilty everyone who does not trust in his Son, because they did not trust in the name of the Unique Son of God. [19] Now God's judicial ruling is as follows: the one who is the light entered the world, but people loved evil instead of him, because they do evil deeds. [20] They love the darkness because every person who continually does evil deeds hates the one who is the light and will never come to him. They avoid the light so that the light might not reveal what they do. [21] But the person who continually does true deeds comes to the one who is the light so that the light might show everyone what he does and so that everyone might know that God was helping him do these deeds."

[22] After those things happened, Jesus and his disciples entered the region of Judea. He stayed there for a while with his disciples and baptized many people.

[23] John the Baptizer was also baptizing people near the town of Aenon, which is near the town of Salim in the region of Samaria. He was baptizing people there because there was much

water in that place, and people kept coming to John to be baptized. 24 John could do this because John's enemies had not yet put him in prison. 25 Then some of John's disciples started arguing with a Jewish man about Jewish religious cleansing laws. 26 Those who were arguing came to John and said, "Teacher, there was a man who was with you when you were baptizing people on the other side of the Jordan River. You had testified about who he was. Look! Now he is baptizing people, and many people are going out to him!" 27 John answered, "Nobody can receive anything unless God gives it to him. 28 You are surely witnesses to me saying that I am not the Messiah, but I am the one whom God has sent before the Messiah. 29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. I am like the friend of the bridegroom. I stand and listen to him and am very happy because I hear the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, because the bride is going to the bridegroom, I am extremely joyful. 30 Jesus, the bridegroom, must become more influential, and I, the bridegroom's friend, must become less influential.

31 Jesus comes from heaven, and he is greater than everyone and everything. Those like myself who are from the earth can only speak with the limited perspective of someone from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is greater than everyone and everything on the earth. 32 Jesus tells people about the things he has seen and heard in heaven, but very few people accept what he says. 33 However, whoever believes what Jesus says has verified that God is truthful. 34 This is because this Jesus whom God has sent says God's words. We know he says God's words because God surely gives his Spirit to him without limit. 35 God the Father loves the Son and has given him authority over everything. 36 Whoever trusts in God's Son will live forever with him in heaven. Whoever does not obey the Son of God will never have eternal life. Rather, God will continually be furious with him."

4 1 Later, the religious group called the Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining more disciples than John the Baptizer and that he was baptizing more people than John was baptizing. Jesus also found out that the Pharisees had heard this. 2 (Jesus did not actually baptize anyone, but his disciples were baptizing people.) 3 When he found out that the Pharisees were aware of him, Jesus left the region of Judea and returned once more to the region of Galilee. 4 Now to get to the region of Galilee he had to go through the region of Samaria. 5 Next, they arrived at a city named Sychar in the region of Samaria. Sychar was near the plot

of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph a long time ago. 6 (Jacob's well was in that area.) After arriving at Sychar Jesus was very tired because of his long journey, so he sat down to rest next to Jacob's well. It was about noon. 7 A Samaritan woman came out to the well to lower a bucket on a rope to pull up some water. Jesus said to her, "Please give me some water to drink." 8 He said this because his disciples had left him by himself and had gone into the city in order to buy food. 9 And the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "I am surprised that you, a Jew, are asking me, a woman from Samaria, for a drink." (She said this because Jews usually would not have anything to do with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus replied to her, "If you had known the gift that God wants to give you, and if you had known who I am who is requesting a drink from you, you would have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you living water." 11 The woman replied, "Sir, you do not have a bucket with which to draw the water up out of the well, and this well is deep. Since you can not get the water out of this well, where did you get this living water from? 12 You are surely not greater than our father Jacob. He dug this well and gave it to us. He, his sons, and his livestock drank water from it as well." 13 Jesus replied to her, "Everyone who drinks water from this well will become thirsty again. 14 But anyone who drinks the water that I will give him will never become thirsty again. Rather, the water that I will give him will become a spring of water inside him that fills him up and causes him to live forever in heaven." 15 The woman said to Jesus, "Sir, please give me some of this water in order that I may never become thirsty again or have to come to this well to draw water again."

16 Jesus told her, "Go get your husband and bring him here." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus told her, "You are right in saying that you have no husband, 18 because you have had not one, but five, husbands, and the man you are currently living with is not your husband. What you have said about not having a husband is true."

19 The woman said to Jesus, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped God right here on this mountain, but you Jews say that we must worship God at your temple in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus told her, "Madam, believe me when I say that a time is coming when neither here on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You people here in Samaria worship the God whom you do not know. We Jews worship the God whom we know. This is true because the way to be saved from your sins comes from among the Jews. 23 Nevertheless, the time is coming and has now arrived when those who

truly worship God will worship the Father spiritually and truthfully. This is because the Father indeed searches for such people to worship him. 24 God is a spiritual being, and those who worship him must worship him spiritually and truthfully." 25 The woman said to Jesus, "I know that the Messiah will come. (He is the one called 'Christ' in Greek.) When he comes, he will tell us everything that we need to know." 26 Jesus told her, "I, who am speaking to you now, I am the Messiah!"

27 Just at that moment, his disciples came back from the city. They were astonished because Jesus was talking alone with a woman whom he did not know. However, no one dared to ask him, "What do you want from her?" or "Why are you talking with her at all?"

28 At that time the woman left her water jar there and returned to the city. She said to the men of the city, 29 "Come and meet this man who told me so many things that I have done! He could not be the Messiah, could he?" 30 Those men left the city and came to Jesus.

31 While the woman was gone, Jesus' disciples, who had just returned with the food, pleaded with him to eat. They said, "Teacher, please eat something!" 32 Jesus told them, "I have sustenance that you know nothing about!" 33 So they were saying to one another, "Surely no one else could have brought him something to eat, could they?" 34 Jesus told them, "This is what sustains me: It is to do what my Father—who sent me—wants and to complete my Father's work. 35 At this time of the year you usually say, 'There are four months left, and then we will harvest the crops.' Listen to what I am telling you. Look and see that these people are like fields that are now ready for harvest! 36 The one who harvests these crops receives payment and collects fruit, which is people receiving life forever in heaven. The result is that those who sow the seed and those who reap the harvest will be glad together. 37 What I am going to say is true: One person sows the seeds, and another person harvests the crops. 38 I sent you disciples of mine to gather the harvest from a crop that you did not plant. Others have worked very hard to plant the crop, but you are now joining them in their work."

39 Now many Samaritans who lived in the city of Sychar trusted in Jesus because of what the woman had told them. She said, "He told me so many things that I have done." 40 When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to remain with them. So he stayed there with them for two more days. 41 Many more of them trusted in Jesus because of what he

proclaimed to them. **42** The townspeople told the woman, “We believe in Jesus now, but not just because of what you told us about him. We believe because we have heard his message for ourselves. Now we know that this man truly is the one who saves the believers in the world from their sins.”

43 After he stayed for two days with the Samaritans, Jesus left the city of Sychar and entered the region of Galilee. **44** (Jesus wanted to go to Galilee because he himself confirmed that a prophet does not receive honor in the place where he grew up and he did not want publicity.) **45** Since this is true, when he arrived in the region of Galilee many of the people there merely welcomed him because they had seen all the amazing things he had done in Jerusalem during the recent Passover celebration, which they also had gone to. **46** Next, Jesus went back again to the town of Cana in the region of Galilee. That was where he had turned water into wine. There was an official of the king who lived nearby in the city of Capernaum and had a son who was very sick. **47** When that official heard that Jesus had come back to Galilee from Judea, he went to Jesus in Cana and asked him to come down to Capernaum and heal his son, because his son would die soon. **48** Jesus then told him, “You people will only trust in me as the Messiah if you see me perform wonderful miracles!” **49** The official of the king said to him, “Sir, please come down to my home in Capernaum before my son dies!” **50** Jesus told him, “Go home. Your son will live.” The man trusted what Jesus told him, and he started to go back home. **51** As the official was traveling down to his home in the city of Capernaum, his servants met him along the road. They told him, “Your child is going to live.” **52** He asked his servants, “At what time did my son start getting better?” They answered him, “At 1:00 PM yesterday his fever went away.” **53** And the boy’s father recognized that his son had recovered at the exact time that Jesus had told him that his son would live. So this same man, along with everyone who lived in his house, trusted in Jesus.

54 That was the second great miracle that Jesus did. He did it during the time that he came to the region of Galilee after leaving the region of Judea.

5 **1** After those things happened, the time came for another Jewish festival, and Jesus walked up to the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the festival. **2** There is a place called the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, which is one of the gates going into the city. There is a pool beside that gate

which people called Bethesda in the language used by the Jews. Next to the pool are five
porches with roofs. **3** Many people were lying on these porches. They were people who were
ill, unable to see, unable to walk, or unable to move. **4** 9 [They were lying there because an
angel from the Lord would occasionally come down and aggravate the water. Whoever was the
first person to step into the water after the angel aggravated it was healed from whatever illness
or infirmity that was afflicting him.] **5** There was a man lying near this pool called Bethesda
who had been sick for 38 years. **6** Jesus saw this man lying near the pool, and he knew that he
had been lying there for a long time. He asked the man, "Do you want your health to get
better?" **7** The ill man answered him, "Sir, I do not have anyone who can put me into the pool
when an angel stirs the water. By the time I can put myself into the pool, someone else has
already gone down into the pool and been healed before me, so that I cannot be healed." **8** Jesus
told him, "Stand up! Pick up the mat that you have been lying on and walk!" **9** Then Jesus
healed the man at once, and the man picked up the mat that he had been lying on and walked.

(Now this happened on the Jewish day for rest known as the Sabbath.) **10** Because it was the
Jewish day for rest, the Jewish leaders said to the man whom Jesus had healed, "Today is a day
for rest. You are not allowed to carry your mat on this day, because it is work." **11** The man
whom Jesus had healed answered them, "The man who healed me told me to pick up the mat
that I had been lying on and walk." **12** The Jewish leaders asked him, "Who told you to pick up
your mat and walk?" **13** However, the man whom Jesus had healed did not know who had
healed him, because Jesus had left the man without being noticed, since that area was crowded.

14 Later, Jesus found the man whom he had healed in the temple and told him, "Look, you
are well now! Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse than your previous illness might
happen to you." **15** That man went away and told the Jewish leaders that the man who had
healed him was Jesus. **16** So the Jewish leaders started persecuting Jesus because he was
miraculously healing people on the Jewish day for rest. **17** Jesus gave this answer to them,
"God, my Father, is working today, so I am also working." **18** As a consequence of him saying
this, the Jewish leaders were trying to kill Jesus even more than they had tried before. They
wanted to kill him because he was not only disobeying their rules for the day for rest but also
because he was claiming that he was equal with God by saying that God was his own Father.

19 Because of **these accusations** Jesus replied to the Jewish leaders, “I am telling you **people** the truth: I, the Son, can do nothing on my own authority. I can only do what I perceive that God, the Father, is doing. Whatever the Father does, I, the Son, also do. **20** **This is true** because the Father loves me, the Son, and makes known to me everything that he is doing. The Father will also make known to me miraculous deeds that will be even greater than the miracles **that I have already done** in order that you might be astonished by them. **21** **This will happen** because I, the Son, give eternal life to anyone I want in the same way that the Father resurrects those who have died and gives them life again. **22** **This is true** because the Father does not judge anyone. Rather, he has given all authority to judge people to me, the Son. **23** **The Father did this** in order that everyone would honor me, the Son, in the same way that they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor me cannot honor my Father, who sent me. **24** I am telling you people the truth: Anyone who accepts and obeys my teachings and trusts God who sent me lives forever **with me in heaven**, and God does not judge him as guilty. Instead, that person has gone from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive.

25 I am telling you people the truth: A time is coming and, in fact, is here already when those who have died will hear my voice, the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear me will live. **26** **This is true** because as the Father is able to make people alive, in the same way he has also given me, the Son, the ability to make people alive. **27** The Father has authorized me to judge all mankind, because I am the Son of Man. **28** Do not be surprised **that the Father has done** this, because there will be a time when everyone who has died will hear my voice.
29 Then they will come out of their graves. God will raise up those who have done good to give them eternal life. But God will raise up those who have done evil to condemn and punish them forever. **30** I can do nothing on my own. I judge according to what I hear **from the Father**, and I judge in a just manner. **I judge justly** because I do not try to do what I want. Rather, I do what my Father, who has sent me, wants.

31 If I alone were the only one to be a witness about myself, **according to the law of Moses** my witness would not be trustworthy. **32** Nevertheless, there is someone else who testifies about me, and I know that what he testifies about me is trustworthy. **33** You Jewish leaders sent messengers to John the Baptizer, and he told you the truth about me. **34** However, I do not need anyone to be a witness for me. Nevertheless, I am saying this about John the Baptizer in

order that God might save you. 35 John the Baptizer proclaimed God's truth to you like a burning and shining lamp. You were willing to rejoice for a while in the light that was the truth that he proclaimed. 36 However, the witness that I give about myself is even greater than the witness John gave about me. This is because this witness is the miraculous works that God the Father has allowed me to do. These very works that I am doing are proof that the Father has sent me. 37 Furthermore, my Father who sent me is the very one who has given testimony about me. None of you have ever heard him speak or seen what he looks like. 38 You also do not obey the Father's teachings. I know this is true because you do not trust me, the very person he has sent! 39 You carefully study the Scriptures because you believe that by studying them you will be able to live forever in heaven. It is those very Scriptures that declare who I am. 40 Yet still you refuse to be my disciples in order that you might live forever in heaven.

41 I do not accept honor from anyone. 42 However, I know that you do not love God at all. 43 I have come with my Father's authority, but still you do not accept me. If someone else were to come with his own authority, you would accept him. 44 You cannot possibly trust in me when you are honoring each other instead of desiring the one and only God to honor you!

45 Do not think that I am the one who will accuse you before my Father. Moses, the very person you have hoped would defend you, is actually the person who will accuse you. 46 He will accuse you because if you had trusted Moses, but you do not, then you would trust me, because Moses explained about me in the law. 47 Since you do not even trust what Moses wrote, you cannot possibly trust what I have said to you!"

6 1 After those things happened, Jesus crossed over to the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee, which some people also call the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A large crowd followed him because they had seen the miraculous signs he was performing, that is, healing people who were very ill. 3 Jesus walked up on a steep hillside and sat down there with his disciples. 4 (Now at that time the Jewish Passover celebration was about to take place.) 5 Jesus then looked up and saw a very large crowd of people walking toward him. He asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread in order to feed all these people?" 6 (He asked Philip this question in order to test his faith, because Jesus already knew what he was going to do about the problem.) 7 Philip replied to him, "If we had the money that a man can earn in 200 days of work, it

would not be enough money to buy bread to give each person in this crowd even a little piece to eat." **8** Another disciple of his, Simon Peter's brother Andrew, told Jesus, **9** "There is a boy here who has five little loaves of barley bread and two small fish. Yet, these few loves and fish are certainly not enough to feed all these people!" **10** Jesus told his disciples to make the people sit down. Thus about 5,000 men sat down. (There was a lot of grass in that place **for them to sit down on**.) **11** Jesus then took the little loaves of barley bread, and he thanked God for the food. **Then** he **and his disciples** gave the loaves to the people who were sitting **on the grass** in order to eat. He did the same with the two fish. The people ate all the fish and bread that they wanted to eat. **12** When everyone had eaten until they were full, Jesus told his disciples to collect all the leftover, uneaten pieces of barley bread in order that none of it would be wasted. **13** Thus his disciples collected the pieces, and they filled 12 large baskets with the broken pieces that the people had left over from the five little loaves of barley bread.

14 Because **of this**, when the people saw this miraculous sign that Jesus had performed **in front of them**, they said, "Surely he is the Prophet whom **God promised** to send into the world!" **15** When Jesus knew that the people were planning to grab him in order to force him to be their king, he left them again and went up the hillside to be completely alone.

16 When it was evening, Jesus' disciples walked down the hillside to the Sea of Galilee. **17** **They** got into a boat and started to sail across the sea to the town of Capernaum. (It had already become dark, and Jesus had still not joined them.) **18** Because the wind was blowing strongly, it was causing the sea to be very turbulent. **19** After Jesus' disciples had rowed the boat around four-and-a-half or five-and-a-half kilometers out into the sea, they saw Jesus walking on the water and approaching the boat. They were terrified! **20** Jesus told them, "It is I, Jesus! Stop being afraid!" **21** They were very glad to take him into the boat. As soon as he was with them in the boat, their boat arrived at the place where they were going.

22 The day after Jesus had fed the crowd, the crowd of people that had stayed on the other side of the sea realized that there had been only one boat there **the day before**. **They also knew** that Jesus had not gone in the boat with his disciples. **23** (People came from the city of Tiberias in other boats. **They put their boats** near the place where the crowd had eaten the bread after the Lord Jesus had thanked God for it.) **24** So when the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his

disciples were there, they got into those boats and sailed to the city of Capernaum to look for Jesus.

25 The crowd found Jesus in Capernaum on the side of the Sea of Galilee that is opposite **from where he had fed them**. They asked him, "Teacher, **we know you did not come in a boat,** so when did you arrive here at Capernaum?" **26** Jesus replied, "I am telling you the truth: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs that I performed. Rather, **you are looking for me** only because you ate until you were full of the loaves of bread that I gave you. **27** Stop working for food that will soon spoil! Instead, work for the food that will bring you life forever **in heaven**! **That food** is the bread that I, the Son of Man, will give you. **I alone can give it to you** because God my Father approves of me."

28 Then the crowd asked Jesus, "What works should we do in order to please God?" **29** Jesus answered them, "The work that God wants you to do is this: Trust in me, the one whom he has sent." **30** The crowd asked him, "Then what miracle will you do in order for us to see it and trust in you? What will you do for us? **31** Our ancestors ate manna **when they wandered** in the wilderness **with Moses**, just as the prophets wrote: 'God gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"

32 Jesus answered them, "I am telling you the truth: It was not Moses who gave your ancestors that bread from heaven. No, it was my Father, who is now giving you the true bread out of heaven. **33** **This is true** because the true bread from God has come down from heaven and gives eternal life to the people in the world."

34 **The crowd did not understand what he meant**, so they said to Jesus, "Sir, please give this bread to us all the time." **35** Jesus told the crowd, "**Like food sustains physical life**, I am the bread that gives eternal life. **Unlike with food or drink**, anyone who trusts in me will surely be satisfied forever. **36** Nevertheless, I have already told you that even though you see me, you still do not trust me. **37** All the people my Father gives to me will come **and be my disciples**, and I will surely never drive away any of them. **38** **I will never do that** because I have not come down from heaven in order to do what I want. Rather, **I have come down** in order to do what my Father, who sent me, wants me to do. **39** This is what my Father, who sent me, wants: **He wants me** to keep all of those whom he has given to me. **He also wants** me to make these ones alive

again on the last day when I judge everyone. 40 This is true because this is also what my Father wants: He wants everyone who recognizes who I, the Son, am, and trusts in me to live forever with me in heaven. I will make these ones alive again on the last day when I judge everyone."

41 The Jewish leaders then started to grumble about Jesus, because he had said that he was the true bread that had come down out of heaven. 42 They said, "This is just Jesus, Joseph's son! We know who his parents are. He cannot possibly have come down out of heaven as he claims!" 43 Jesus answered them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves about what I just said. 44 Only those whom my Father, who sent me, causes to come and be my disciples are able to do so. I myself will make those people who come to me alive again on the last day when I judge everyone. 45 The prophets wrote that God will teach everyone. Everyone who listens to and learns from my Father will come and be my disciples. 46 No one has seen God my Father other than me. I am the one who came from God. I alone have seen him. 47 I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will live forever with me in heaven. 48 I am the true bread that gives eternal life. 49 Your ancestors ate manna when they wandered in the wilderness with Moses, but they still died. 50 But this bread that I am talking about came down out of heaven in order that someone would eat it and that person's spirit would never die. 51 I truly am this bread that gives eternal life and came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever with me in heaven. My body is also this bread. I will give up my body for the sake of the eternal life of everyone in the world."

52 The Jewish leaders then started arguing with each other. They said, "This man surely cannot give his body to us in order for us to eat it!" 53 So Jesus told them: "I am telling you the truth: You must eat the flesh of me, the Son of Man, and drink my blood. If you do not do these things, then you will never have eternal life. 54 Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live forever with me in heaven. I will also make that person alive again on the last day when I judge everyone. 55 This is so because my flesh is true spiritual food, and my blood is true spiritual drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will be united with me, and I will be united with them. 57 My Father makes everyone alive. He has sent me here, and I can make people alive because he has enabled me to do so. In the same way, those who feed on me will live forever because of what I will do for them. 58 I am this bread that has come down out of heaven. This bread is not like the bread that the Israelite ancestors ate in the wilderness but

still eventually died. Anyone who eats me—this bread—will live forever with me in heaven.”
59 Jesus said these statements to the Jewish leaders in a synagogue while he was teaching in the city of Capernaum.

60 After they heard what he had said, many of Jesus’ disciples said, “What he is teaching is difficult to accept. Indeed, no one can accept it!” 61 Although no one told him, Jesus knew that his disciples were grumbling about what he had said. So he asked them, “Did my teaching offend you? 62 If this teaching has offended you, then would you also be offended if you saw me, the Son of Man, ascending to heaven where I was formerly? 63 The Holy Spirit is the only one who can give anyone eternal life. Human nature is useless in this matter. What I have taught you comes from the Holy Spirit and gives eternal life. 64 Nevertheless, some of you do not believe what I have said.” (Jesus said this because he knew since he began his work who would not believe him and who would eventually betray him.)

65 Then Jesus said, “Because some of you do not believe me, I told you earlier that only those to whom God the Father has given the ability to come and be my disciple will be able to do so.”

66 After Jesus said these things, a lot of his disciples went back to doing what they had been doing before they met him and stopped being his disciples. 67 Because so many left him, Jesus asked his 12 representatives, “Surely you do not also want to leave me, do you?” 68 Simon Peter replied, “Lord, if we were to leave you, there is no one else we could go to! Only you teach the message that allows us to live forever in heaven! 69 We trust in you, and we know for certain that you are the Holy One who has come from God!” 70 Jesus answered them, “I surely chose all you 12 men to represent me, but one of you is under the control of Satan!” 71 (When Jesus said this he was talking about Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son, because he was the one among Jesus’ 12 representatives who would later betray Jesus.)

7 1 After those things happened, Jesus walked around in the region of Galilee because he did not want to walk around in the region of Judea. He avoided Judea because the Jewish leaders there were trying to find a way to kill him. 2 (Now at that time the Jewish Shelters celebration was about to take place.) 3 Jesus’ brothers told him, “Leave here and go to the

region of Judea in order that your disciples can also observe you doing miraculous works. **4** Do your miraculous works in Judea because no one who wants to be famous does anything secretly. Since you are doing all these miracles, reveal who you claim to be to everyone by doing miraculous works!" **5** Jesus' brothers said this because not even they believed he was the Messiah. **6** Because they did not believe in him, Jesus told them, "This is not the right time for me to go to Jerusalem, but you can go there whenever you want. **7** No one in the world can hate you. However, everyone hates me because I declare that they do evil deeds. **8** You go to Jerusalem for the celebration. I am not going to the celebration yet, because now is not the right time for me to go." **9** After saying that to his brothers, Jesus stayed a little longer in the region of Galilee.

10 However, a few days after his brothers left for the festival, he also went, but he did so secretly. **11** Because the Jewish leaders expected Jesus to be at the celebration, they tried to find him. They asked people, "Where is that man?" **12** The crowds were quietly speaking a lot about Jesus. Some people said, "He is a good man!" But others said, "No! He deceives the crowd!" **13** Nevertheless, the people were afraid of the Jewish leaders, so they did not speak about Jesus in public.

14 About halfway through the Shelters celebration, Jesus entered the temple courtyard and started teaching the people there. **15** The Jewish leaders were shocked at his teaching. They said, "This man has not received religious training. He cannot possibly know the scriptures so well!" **16** Jesus replied to them, "What I teach does not come from myself. On the contrary, it comes from God, who sent me. **17** If anyone wants to do what God wants, then that person will know that what I am teaching has come from God and not only by my own authority. **18** Anyone who speaks on his own authority only wants to glorify himself. However, anyone who wants to glorify the person who sent him speaks the truth and acts righteously. **19** Moses did indeed give you laws from God. None of you completely obeys those laws. Since that is true, why are you trying to kill me for supposedly disobeying those same laws that you do not obey?"

20 Some people in the crowd replied, "A demon is controlling you! No one is trying to kill you!" **21** Jesus replied to the crowd, "Because I did one miraculous healing on the day for rest,

all of you are shocked. **22** Because some works like healing would occur on the day for rest, Moses gave you a law about circumcision. That law states that you must circumcise your sons exactly seven days after they are born. (Circumcision did not actually begin with Moses, but this rite began with your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.) Because of that law, sometimes you must work on the day for rest by circumcising your male babies. **23** Since you sometimes circumcise someone on the day for rest in order to avoid disobeying the law of Moses, you should not be angry with me for doing a good work like healing someone on that day! **24** Stop judging me according to what you have seen! Rather, judge me according to what God says is right."

25 Some of the people in the crowd who dwelled in Jerusalem then said, "This is the man that our leaders are trying to kill! **26** Look! He is saying these things publicly, but our leaders are not saying anything to oppose him. Can it be that our leaders really know that he is the Messiah? **27** But this man cannot be the Messiah! We know where this man came from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

28 Jesus then spoke loudly while he was teaching in the temple courtyard. He said, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I have come from. But I have not come here on my own authority. Rather, the one who sent me is the real God, and you do not know him. **29** I know him because I have come from him. He is the one who sent me."

30 Because Jesus said these things, the Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him, but no one could seize him, because it was not yet the right time for him to die. **31** In contrast to the Jewish leaders, many in the crowd of people trusted in Jesus. They kept saying, "When the Messiah comes, he surely will not be able to do more miraculous signs than this man!" **32** Some of the Pharisees overheard them quietly speaking these things about Jesus. Then they and the ruling priests sent temple guards to arrest him.

33 Because they did this, Jesus said, "I will only be with you for a little while longer. Soon I will go back to God, who sent me. **34** You will search for me, but you will not find me. You will not be able to come to the place where I will be." **35** So the Jewish leaders said to each other, "Where can this man go where we cannot find him? Will he actually go to those Jews who are spread throughout the world outside of Israel? Will he even teach the people there who

are not Jews? **36** What did he mean when he said that we will search for him, but we will not find him, and we will not be able to come to the place where he will be?"

37 Now on the final and most important day of the **Shelters** celebration, Jesus stood up **in the temple courtyard** and spoke loudly. He said, "Anyone who is thirsty should come to me and drink **what I will give them**! **38** This is what the prophets wrote in the scripture about anyone who trusts in me: 'Water that gives eternal life will abundantly flow from that person's innermost being.'" **39** (Now Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit, whom God was going to give to those who trusted in Jesus. **He said this** because **at that time God had not yet sent** the Holy Spirit **to dwell within those who trusted in him**, because Jesus had not yet received honor **by his death, resurrection, and return to heaven**.)

40 After some people among the crowd heard what Jesus had said, they said, "He is truly the Prophet **whom God had said would come**!" **41** Some other people in the crowd said, "He is the Messiah!" However, others **who mistakenly thought that Jesus was born in Galilee,** said, "But the Messiah cannot possibly come from the region of Galilee. **42** The prophets wrote in the scriptures that the Messiah must come from the descendants of King David and **that he must come** from the village of Bethlehem, where David came from!" **43** Thus the people in the crowd divided **into opposing groups** on account of Jesus. **44** (Some of the people in the crowd wanted to arrest him. However, no one seized him.)

45 The temple guards then returned to the ruling priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him and bring him here?" **46** The temple guards replied, "No one has ever spoken like this man has!" **47** Because **the guards said that,** the Pharisees replied by asking, "Can it be that he has deceived you as well? **48** Surely, none of the members of our highest governing council or us Pharisees have trusted in him! **49** However, this crowd of people does not know God's laws, and God has cursed them!"

50 Then Nicodemus spoke. (He was the man who had come to Jesus **at night to speak with him** in the past. **He had done this** even though he was one of the Pharisees, **which was a group that usually opposed Jesus.**) He told the Jewish religious leaders, **51** "Our Jewish laws surely do not allow us to condemn someone without first listening to him and learning about what he has done." **52** They replied to him insultingly, "Surely, you are not from the region of Galilee as

well! Are you? Read through the scriptures carefully! If you do that, you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee."

53 [10][Then they all left and went to their own homes.

8 **1** [11]Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and stayed near there that night. **2** At dawn the next morning, Jesus returned to the temple courtyard and many people came to him. **3** Some of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman to him. They had apprehended her while she was committing adultery. They made her stand up in the midst of this group. **4** The priests wanted to test Jesus in order to be able to accuse him of breaking the law of Moses before the highest Jewish governing council. So they said to him, "Teacher, we apprehended this woman while she was committing adultery, the very act itself! **5** Now Moses commanded us in the law that we must kill such women with stones. Nevertheless, what do you say we should do?" **6** However, Jesus bent down and wrote something on the ground with his finger. **7** While they continued to question him, he got up and told them, "Let the one among you who has never sinned throw the first stone at her and lead the rest to kill her!" **8** Then Jesus stooped down again and wrote something on the ground with his finger. **9** After he did this, those Jewish leaders who were questioning him started walking away, one by one. The older ones left first and then the younger ones. Then only Jesus was there with the woman in the midst of the people. **10** Jesus stood up and asked her, "Where are the men who were accusing you? Has no one condemned you to be punished?" **11** The woman replied, "There is no one, sir." Then Jesus said, "I do not condemn you to be punished either. Leave, and from now on do not sin like this anymore!"]

12 Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, "I am the one who gives God's good and true light to the people in the world. Anyone who becomes my disciple will never walk in sinful darkness again. Rather, that person will have God's good and true light that gives eternal life." **13** The Pharisees then told him, "You are the only witness for yourself! Since the law of Moses requires at least two witnesses, what you say cannot be true!" **14** Jesus replied, "Even if I were the only witness for myself, what I say is still true because I know where I came from and I know where I am going. Nevertheless, you do not know where I came from and you do not know where I am going. **15** You judge people according to human standards. However, I have

not come to judge anyone in that manner. 16 Even when I do judge people, I will judge them according to the true standard, because I do not judge people on my own. Rather, I and my Father who sent me, will judge people together. 17 Moses even wrote in your law that when at least two witnesses say the same thing, then what they say is true. 18 I am my own witness, but my Father who sent me is also a witness for me. Therefore, what I say is true."

19 Because Jesus said his father was a witness for him, the Pharisees asked him, "Where is your father?" Jesus replied, "You do not know me, and you do not know my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father, but you do not." 20 He said these things about himself while he was teaching in the temple courtyard. He said them at the place in the temple courtyard where people brought money offerings. Nobody apprehended him, because it was not yet the right time for him to die.

21 Jesus then told the people again, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but since you sinfully reject me, you will die without God forgiving you. You will not be able to come to the place where I am going." 22 The Jewish leaders then said among themselves, "Perhaps he plans to kill himself, and that is what he means when he says that we will not be able to come to the place where he is going." 23 Jesus told them, "You are from this earth below, but I am from heaven above. You belong to this sinful world. I do not belong to this world. 24 Because of this I told you that you will die without God forgiving you for all the sins that you have committed. This will certainly happen unless you trust that I am God, as I say I am."

25 Because he said that, they asked him, "Who are you?" Jesus replied, "That is what I have been telling you ever since the beginning! 26 I could say many things about you and judge you, but I will not do those things at this time. Rather, I will tell the people in the world only what I have heard from the one who sent me. He always says the truth."

27 (They did not understand that Jesus was telling them about his Father in heaven.) 28 So Jesus told them, "When you have lifted me up to kill me, the Son of Man, you will know that I am God, and you will know that I do not do anything on my own authority. Rather, I only say what my Father has taught me to say. 29 My Father, who sent me, is always with me. He has never abandoned me, because I always do only the things that delight him." 30 While Jesus was saying these things, many more people believed that he was the Messiah.

31 Jesus then told the Jews who now believed that he was the Messiah, “If you obey what I
teach you, then you are my genuine disciples. 32 Furthermore, you will know God’s truth, and
believing that truth will free you from what has enslaved you.” 33 They answered him, “We are
the descendants of Abraham. We have never been anyone’s slaves! Why do you say that we
need to be free?” 34 Jesus replied, “I am telling you the truth: Anyone who sins is controlled by
his sinful desires like a slave is controlled by his master. 35 Slaves do not remain as members of
their master’s family forever, but may be freed or sold. However, a son is a member of the family
forever. 36 So if the Son frees you from being slaves to sin, you will absolutely be able to
refrain from sinning. 37 I know that you are Abraham’s physical descendants. However, you
are trying to kill me because you refuse to trust what I say. 38 I am telling you about the things
that my Father has shown me. Therefore, I say that you do what your father has told you to
do.”

39 They replied to him, “Abraham is our ancestor.” Jesus said to them, “If you were
Abraham’s descendants, you would be doing the same things he did. 40 I have been telling you
the true things that God told me, but you are trying to kill me. Abraham did not do something
like that. 41 You are doing the same things that your real father did.” They told him, “We are
not illegitimate children, like you are! We have only one Father, and that is God.” 42 Jesus told
them, “If God were your Father, which he is not, you would love me because I came from him
and have come to this world. This is true because I did not come on my own authority. Rather, I
came because God sent me. 43 Do you know why you do not understand what I say? It is
because you do not accept and obey what I have told you! 44 You belong to your father, the
devil, and you desire to do what he desires. He has been murdering people since the time
people first sinned. He has rejected what is true, because he never speaks those true things.
Whenever he lies, he is doing what is natural for him to do, because he is a liar. He is even the
origin of lying. 45 Yet you do not believe me, because I tell you what is true! 46 Since I have
never sinned, none of you can prove that I have. Since I tell you what is true, there is no good
reason for you to not believe what I say! 47 Those who belong to God accept and obey what he
has said. Since this is true, you do not accept and obey what God has said, because you do not
belong to God.”

48 The Jews opposing Jesus replied to him, “We are certainly correct when we say that you
are one of the Samaritans, whom we hate, and that a demon is controlling you!” 49 Jesus
replied, “A demon is not controlling me! On the contrary, I honor my Father in heaven, and you
dishonor me! 50 I do not desire to persuade people to praise me. There is someone else who
desires to do that and judges whether you or I am telling the truth. 51 I am telling you the truth:
Anyone who obeys my teaching will surely never die!”

52 The Jews opposing Jesus said to him, “Now we are sure that a demon is controlling
you! Abraham and the prophets died long ago! Yet you say that anyone who obeys your
teaching will surely never die! 53 You are surely not greater than our ancestor Abraham! He
died and all the prophets also died. So who do you think you are?” 54 Jesus replied, “If I
persuade people to praise me, that praise would be worthless. My Father is the one who praises
me. He is the one whom you say is your God. 55 Although you do not know God, I do know
him. If I said that I did not know him, I would be a liar like each of you. In contrast to you, I
know him, and I always obey what he says. 56 Your ancestor Abraham was overjoyed to think
that he could see me come to the world. God allowed him to see me come, and he was happy.”

57 Because Jesus said this, the Jews opposing him told him, “Abraham died a long time ago,
and you are not even fifty years old! How can you have seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus told them, “I
am telling you the truth: I was God before Abraham was born!” 59 Because he was claiming to
be God, the Jews opposing Jesus picked up rocks to throw at him to kill him. But Jesus hid in
the crowd and left the temple courtyard.

9 1 While Jesus was walking along the path, he saw a man who had been blind since the
day he was born. 2 His disciples asked him, “Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be blind
when he was born? Did this man or his parents sin?” 3 Jesus replied, “It was neither the sin of
this man nor the sin of his parents that caused him to be blind when he was born. Rather, he was
blind when he was born so that I might show people the miraculous works God will do in him.
4 While I am still with you, we must do the miraculous works that my Father who sent me
wants us to do. Just like day is followed by night, when people cannot work, a time will come
when it is too late for us to do what God wants us to do. 5 While I am still living in this world,
I am the one who gives God’s good and true light to the people in the world.”

6 When he said this, he spat on the dirt and made mud by mixing his saliva with the dirt.
Then he spread that mud on the blind man's eyes. 7 Then Jesus said to the blind man, "Go and
wash the mud off in the pool of Siloam!" ("Siloam" means "sent" in Aramaic). So the man left
and washed the mud off in that pool. Then he went home when he was able to see. 8 The man's
neighbors and others who had seen him in the past and knew that he was a beggar said, "This
is surely the man who used to sit here and beg!" 9 Some people said, "Yes, he is that man."
Other people said, "No, but he just looks like that man." However, the man himself said, "Yes,
I am the man who was blind!" 10 So they asked him, "How is it that you can see now?" 11 He
replied, "The man people call Jesus made mud with dirt and his saliva and spread it on my eyes.
Then he told me to go to the pool of Siloam and wash the mud off. So I went there and washed
the mud off. Then I was able to see for the first time." 12 They asked him, "Where is that
man?" He replied, "I do not know where he is."

13 Some of the people there took the man who used to be blind to some of the Pharisees.
14 (Now the day when Jesus made the mud with his saliva and enabled the man to see was the
Jewish day for rest.) 15 Then the Pharisees questioned the man for a second time. This time as
well, they asked him about how he was now able to see. He told them, "The man placed mud
on my eyes, and I washed it off, and now I am able to see for the first time." 16 Some of the
Pharisees then said, "We know that this man has not come from God, because he does not
follow the rules for the Jewish day for rest." Some other Pharisees said, "Surely a sinful man
could not do the kinds of miraculous signs that this man does!" So the Pharisees disagreed with
each other regarding who Jesus was. 17 So the Pharisees asked the blind man again, "What do
you say about this man, since you say that he is the one who enabled you to see?" The man
said, "He must be a prophet."

18 Because the man believed that Jesus was a prophet, the Jewish leaders did not believe
that the man had been blind and then became able to see until after they summoned the man's
parents in order to question them. 19 They asked his parents, "Is this man your son? Do you say
that he was blind when he was born? If that is so, then how is he able to see at this time?"
20 His parents replied, "We are certain that this man is our son. We are also certain that he was
blind when he was born. 21 Nevertheless, we do not know how he is able to see at this time.
We also do not know who enabled him to see. Ask him. He is old enough to speak on his own

behalf.” **22** (The Jewish leaders had previously agreed among themselves that they would ban anyone who declared that Jesus was the Messiah from entering the Jewish meeting place. Because of this, the man’s parents were afraid of them and told them those things.) **23** That is also why they said to the Jewish leaders, “Ask him. He is old enough.”

24 So the Jewish leaders summoned for a second time the man who had been blind. They told him, “Glorify God **by speaking only the truth**! We ourselves are certain that this man **who you say healed you** is sinful.” **25** The man whom Jesus healed replied, “I do not know if he is sinful or not. One thing I do know is that I used to be blind, but now I can see.” **26** They then asked him, “What did he do to you **in order to heal you**? How did he enable you to see?” **27** He replied, “I have already told you the answers to those questions, but you did not listen to what I said. Why do you want me to tell you again? Could it be that you also desire to become his disciples?” **28** Then they spoke insultingly to him: “You are that man’s disciple! As for us, we are Moses’s disciples! **29** We are certain that God spoke to Moses **long ago**. As for this man, we do not even know where he came from!” **30** The man replied, “I am amazed! You do not even know where he came from, but he is the one who enabled me to see! **31** We are certain that God does not respond to **the prayers of** sinful people. Rather, he responds to **the prayers of** people who worship him and who do what he wants them to do. **32** Never before has anyone ever heard that someone enabled a man to see who was blind when he was born! **33** If this man had not come from God, he could not have done even one **miracle like that**!” **34** The Jewish leaders replied to him, “You were born blind entirely as a result of **your parents’** sins! How dare you teach us!” Then they banned him from the Jewish meeting place.

35 Jesus heard that the Jewish leaders had banned the man he had healed from the Jewish meeting place. When he **searched for him and** found him, he asked him, “Do you trust the Son of Man?” **36** The man answered, “Sir, who is he? **Please tell me,** so that I may trust him.” **37** Jesus told him, “You have already seen him. I am that very person who is talking to you now.” **38** The man said, “Lord, I trust **that you are the Son of Man**.” Then he went down on his knees and worshiped Jesus.

39 Jesus said, “I have come into this world in order to judge its people. **The result will be** that the people who realize they do not perceive God’s truth may perceive it, like a blind

person becoming able to see. Another result will be that the people who think they perceive God's truth will not perceive it, like a person who sees and becomes blind." 40 When some of the Pharisees who were near Jesus heard him say this, they asked him, "Do you think that we also cannot perceive God's truth, like blind people?" 41 Jesus replied, "If you recognized that you are spiritually blind, you would not be guilty of sin. However, because you claim to perceive God's truth, like someone who sees, you are still guilty of your sin."

10 1 "I am telling you the truth: Anyone who enters into the sheep pen by any way other than the pen's gate is a thief or bandit who has come to steal the sheep. 2 The man who enters the sheep pen through the gate is the shepherd who takes care of the sheep. 3 The man who guards the gate when the shepherd is away opens the gate for the shepherd when he comes. The sheep hear the sound of the shepherd's voice. He summons by name each of the sheep that belong to him and leads them out of the pen. 4 After the shepherd has brought out of the pen all of the sheep that belong to him, he walks in front of them. His sheep follow him from behind because they recognize the sound of his voice. 5 His sheep will never follow someone whom they do not know. Rather, they will run away from him because they do not recognize the voices of people they do not know."

6 Jesus told this illustration from the work that shepherds do to the Pharisees. Nevertheless, they did not understand what the illustration meant. 7 So Jesus spoke to them again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate through which the sheep enter into the sheep pen. 8 All the leaders who came before me without God's authority were thieves and bandits. However, the true sheep did not obey them. 9 I myself am the gate to heaven. God will save from eternal punishment anyone who comes to him by trusting in me. Whoever trusts in me will be like a sheep who walks around safely and finds food. 10 Your leaders are like thieves who come only to steal, kill, and destroy the sheep. I have come to give the sheep eternal life, which will be full of blessings.

11 I myself am like a good shepherd. The good shepherd is willing to die in order to protect and to save his sheep, and so am I willing to die for my disciples. 12 Suppose that someone hires a man who is not a shepherd to protect sheep that do not belong to that man. When he sees a wolf coming to kill the sheep, he leaves the sheep and runs away, so the wolf snatches some of

them and causes some others to scatter. 13 The hired man runs away because he was only protecting the sheep in order to receive money. He does not care about what happens to the sheep. 14 I myself am like a good shepherd. Just like a good shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him, I know those who belong to me, and they know me. 15 We know each other in the same way that my Father and I know each other. I am willing to die for the benefit of those sheep who belong to me. 16 There are also sheep that belong to me and are from a different sheep pen. They are people who are not Jews. I must also bring them to myself. They will respond to what I say, and all those who belong to me will be united as one flock, and I will be their one shepherd. 17 My Father loves me because I will willingly die in order that I may make myself alive again. 18 Nobody is forcing me to die. Rather, I myself choose to die. I have authority to willfully die and I have authority to make myself alive again. That is the work my Father has commanded me to do."

19 The Jewish leaders divided into opposing groups again on account of what Jesus had said. 20 Many of the Jewish leaders said, "A demon is controlling him, and he is crazy! Do not listen to him!" 21 Some other people said, "What he is saying is not something a man controlled by a demon would ever say. Surely a demon cannot possibly enable a blind person to see!"

22 Then the feast to celebrate the temple dedication in Jerusalem took place. 23 Jesus was walking in the temple courtyard in the place called Solomon's Porch. 24 The Jewish leaders gathered around Jesus and said, "How long will you keep us wondering about who you are? If you are the Messiah, then tell us plainly so that we can know." 25 Jesus answered them, "I have told you, but you still do not believe me. The miraculous deeds I do by my Father's authority tell you what you need to know about me. 26 However, you people still do not believe in me, because you do not belong to me. You are like sheep that are not part of my flock. 27 Just like sheep obey the voice of their shepherd, my people respond to what I say. I know them, and they are my disciples. 28 I enable them to live forever with God in heaven. No one can ever destroy them, and no one can ever take them away from me. 29 My Father gave them to me. He is greater than anyone, and no one is able to take them away from him. 30 My father and I are one God."

31 The Jewish leaders again picked up stones in order to throw them at him and kill him.
32 Jesus said to them, “You have seen me do many miraculous good deeds that my Father told
me to do. For which one of them are you going to kill me with stones?” 33 The Jewish leaders
replied, “We do not want to kill you with stones because you did a good deed. Rather, we want
to kill you because you blaspheme God by claiming to be God even though you are just a
man!” 34 Jesus replied to them, “In the Old Testament a prophet wrote that God said, ‘I have
said that you are gods.’ 35 Since God called those to whom he spoke ‘gods’ and no one can
prove that the Scripture is false, 36 why do you say that I am blaspheming God because I said
that I am the Son of God? I am the one whom my Father specially selected to belong to him and
sent into this world. 37 If I am not doing the miraculous works that my Father wants me to do,
then you should not trust me. 38 However, because I am doing these miraculous deeds, you
should trust what these deeds reveal about me even though you do not trust me. You should do
that in order to learn and comprehend that my Father and I are completely united.”

39 Because he said these things, the Jewish leaders tried again to arrest Jesus, but he got
away from them.

40 Then Jesus went back over on the east side of the Jordan River. He went to the place
where John the Baptizer had baptized people at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus stayed there
for a while. 41 Many people came to Jesus there. They said, “John the Baptizer never
performed a miraculous sign, but everything that John said about this man is true!” 42 Many
people trusted in him in that place.

11 1 A man named Lazarus became very ill. He lived in the village of Bethany where his
sisters Mary and Martha also lived. 2 This is the same Mary who later would pour perfume on
the Lord and would wipe the oil off of his feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was
ill. 3 So the two sisters sent someone to tell Jesus about Lazarus. They said, “Lord, the one
whom you love is very ill. Please come!” 4 When Jesus heard about Lazarus’ illness, he said,
“This illness will not end in Lazarus’ death. Rather, the purpose of this illness is to reveal how
great God is. Lazarus became ill in order that the illness may reveal how great I, the Son of
God, am.” 5 (Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus.) 6 So when Jesus heard that
Lazarus was ill, he deliberately remained where he was for two more days.

7 Then after those two days Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go back to the region of
Judea.” 8 His disciples said, “Teacher, the Jewish leaders in Judea currently want to kill you
with stones! You surely should not return there again!” 9 Jesus replied, “You know that there
are 12 hours of daylight. The person who walks during the daytime will walk safely because
the light allows him to see where he is going. 10 However, when a person walks during the
night, he will stumble because there is no light to allow him to see where he is going.”

11 After saying these things, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I will go
there to wake him up.” 12 So his disciples told him, “Lord, if he is sleeping, then he will get
well.” 13 (Jesus was actually speaking about Lazarus’ death, but his disciples thought that he
was talking about actual sleep.) 14 So Jesus told them clearly, “Lazarus is dead. 15 And I
rejoice that I was not there when he died. I let this happen so that you may trust in me. This is
for your benefit. Rather than staying here, let us go to where he is.” 16 So Thomas, whom they
called “The Twin,” said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go with the Teacher in order
that we may die with him.”

17 So when Jesus arrived in the village of Bethany, he learned that people had already put
Lazarus’ dead body in a tomb four days before then. 18 (Jerusalem was only about three
kilometers away from the village of Bethany.) 19 Many Jewish people came to Martha and
Mary in Bethany in order to console both of them concerning their brother Lazarus’ death.
20 When Martha heard someone say that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. Mary
did not go with her but stayed in the house. 21 When Martha met Jesus, she said to him, “Lord,
if you had only been here sooner, my brother would not be dead! 22 However, even now that
he is dead I am certain that God will do for you whatever you ask him to do.” 23 Jesus told her,
“Your brother will live again.” 24 Martha told him, “I am certain that my brother will live
again when God raises all dead people on the last day when he judges everyone.” 25 Jesus told
her, “I am the one who causes dead people to live again. I am the one who gives people eternal
life. Whoever trusts in me will live forever, even if his body dies. 26 All those who receive
eternal life and trust in me will surely live forever. Do you believe that this is true?” 27 Martha
told him, “Yes, I do, Lord! I do indeed believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. You
are the one whom God promised would come into this world.”

28 After she said that, she returned **to the house** and secretly summoned her sister Mary.
She told Mary, “The Teacher has arrived, and he is summoning you.” **29** When Mary heard
what her sister said, she rose quickly and went out to meet Jesus. **30** (At that time Jesus had
not yet entered the village of Bethany. Rather, he was still at the place where Martha had met
him.) **31** The Jewish people who were comforting Mary in her house saw her rise quickly and
go outside, so they followed her. They thought that she was going to the tomb **where they had
buried Lazarus** in order to grieve there.

32 When Mary arrived at the place where Jesus had spoken to Martha and saw him, she
threw herself down on the ground in front of his feet. She told him, “Lord, if you had only
been here sooner, my brother would not be dead!” **33** When Jesus saw her grieving, and the
Jewish people with her also grieving, he became extremely agitated. **34** He asked, “Where
have you buried his body?” They told him, “Lord, come and see **where he is**.” **35** Jesus started
crying. **36** So the Jewish people **who were with Mary** said among themselves, “See how much
he loved Lazarus!” **37** However, others among them said, “He could enable the blind man to
see. But maybe he did not have enough power to prevent this man from dying!”

38 Jesus then was emotionally agitated again when he came to the tomb. (It was a cave,
and a large rock was covering its entrance.) **39** Jesus said, “Remove the rock from the cave’s
entrance.” **However,** Lazarus’ sister Martha told him, “Lord, by this time his body will smell
bad because he died four days ago.” **40** Jesus told her, “I surely told you that if you trusted me,
you would see how great God is!”

41 So some people removed the rock from the cave’s entrance. Jesus looked up toward
heaven and said, “Father, I thank you for listening to me. **42** I know that you always listen to
me. Nevertheless, I said that for the sake of the people standing here. I said this in order that
they might be confident that you sent me.” **43** After he said that prayer, he shouted loudly,
“Lazarus, come out of the tomb!” **44** The man who had died came out of the tomb! **The people
who prepared him for burial** had wrapped his feet and hands with strips of cloth and had
wrapped a cloth around his face. **So** Jesus told the people standing there, “Take off the strips of
cloth that bind him. Allow him to go.”

45 As a result, many of the Jewish people who had come to comfort Mary and who had
witnessed what Jesus had done trusted him. 46 Nevertheless, some of the people there went to
the Pharisees and reported to them what Jesus had done. 47 So the ruling priests and the
Pharisees gathered together the members of the highest Jewish ruling council. They were
saying to each other, “What are we going to do about this man? He is performing many
miraculous signs. 48 If we allow him to keep doing these miracles, everyone will trust in him
and make him their king. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our temple and our
people!”

49 One member of this council was Caiaphas. He was the high priest during that year. He
told them, “You people know nothing! 50 You do not realize that it would be much better for
you to have one man die on behalf of the people than let the Romans kill all of the Jewish
people.” 51 (Caiaphas did not say this because he thought of it himself. Rather, since he was
the high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die on behalf of the Jewish
people. 52 He was also prophesying that Jesus would die, not only for the Jewish people, but also
in order to gather into one people all the children of God whom God has dispersed throughout
the world.) 53 So in the days following the day that Caiaphas prophesied, the Jewish council
made plans to kill Jesus.

54 Because of that, Jesus no longer traveled around publicly among his Jewish opponents.
Instead, he left Jerusalem and went to a town called Ephraim that is in the region near the
desolate area. He remained there with his disciples for a while.

55 At that time the Jewish Passover celebration was about to take place. Many people went
up to Jerusalem from the region. They came before the Passover celebration began in order to
clean themselves according to the Jewish rules for attending the celebration. 56 The people who
came to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration were searching for Jesus. While they were
standing in the temple courtyard, they asked each other, “What do you think? He will surely
not come to the Passover celebration!” 57 Some time earlier the Jewish ruling priests and the
Pharisees had made a command that anyone who found out where Jesus was must report his
location to them so that they could arrest him.

12 [1] Jesus arrived in the village of Bethany six days before the Jewish Passover celebration began. Bethany was the village where Lazarus dwelled. He was the man whom Jesus made alive again after he had died. [2] There in Bethany, some of Jesus' friends gave a dinner to honor Jesus. Martha served the food to the guests, and Lazarus was among those who were sitting together and eating with Jesus. [3] Mary then took a bottle that contained about half a liter of very expensive perfume, which was pure oil from nard plants, and she poured it out on Jesus' feet and then wiped his feet with her hair. The pleasant scent of the perfume filled the entire house.

[4] However, Judas Iscariot objected. (He was the one among Jesus' disciples who would soon help the Jewish leaders arrest Jesus.) He said, [5] "We should have sold this perfume for the money that a man can earn in 300 days of work. Then we could have given that money to poor people!" [6] (Judas did not say this because he cared about poor people. Rather, he said this because he was a thief. He kept charge of the bag that held their money, but he would steal the money that people gave him to put in the bag.) [7] So Jesus said, "Leave her alone! She saved the perfume in order to keep it to prepare me for the time when I die and am buried. [8] She did the right thing because poor people will always be among you whom you can help, but I will not be with you much longer."

[9] A large crowd of Jews heard that Jesus was in Bethany, so they went there. They came not only because Jesus was there, but also because they wanted to see Lazarus. He was the man whom Jesus made alive again after he had died. [10] By contrast, the ruling priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. [11] The ruling priests wanted to kill Lazarus because he was the reason why many of the Jews were no longer believing what they were teaching and were trusting in Jesus instead.

[12] The next day the large crowd of people that had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover celebration found out that Jesus was on his way there. [13] So they cut branches off of palm trees and went out to the road to welcome him as he came into the city. They were shouting, "Please, save us! May God bless the one who comes with his authority. That one is the King of Israel!" [14] When Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he found a young donkey and sat

on it **in order to ride it into the city**. **By doing this,** he fulfilled what some prophets had written in Scripture:

> **15** "Do not be afraid, you who live in Jerusalem.
> Look! Your King is coming.
> He is riding on a donkey's colt!"

16 When these events happened, his disciples did not understand that they were a fulfillment of what those prophets had written. However, after God glorified Jesus **by bringing him back to life**, they remembered what the prophets had written about him and that people had done those things to him.

17 The crowd of people that was following along with Jesus kept telling others that they had seen Jesus summon Lazarus to come out of the tomb and had seen Jesus make him alive again after he had died. **18** A different crowd of people went out of the city gate to meet Jesus. **They did so** because they heard that he had done the miraculous sign of **making Lazarus alive again**. **19** So the Pharisees said to each other, "See! We are failing to stop him. Look! Everyone is becoming his disciples!"

20 Some people who were not Jews were among the people who went up **to Jerusalem** in order to worship God during the Passover celebration. **21** They came to Philip, who was from the city of Bethsaida, which is in the region of Galilee. They asked him, "Sir, would you introduce us to Jesus?" **22** Then Philip reported this to Andrew, and they both went and told Jesus **about the Greeks**. **23** Jesus answered Philip and Andrew, "It is now the time for God to show everyone how great I, the Son of Man, am. **24** I am telling you the truth: **My life is like a seed.** Unless a seed of wheat is planted in the ground and dies, it will only be one seed. But if it dies in the ground, then it will grow and produce much wheat. **25** Anyone who wants to keep on living more than **be my disciple** will die, but anyone who wants to **be my disciple** more than to keep on living in this sinful world will keep his life forever. **26** Anyone who wants to serve me must be my disciple. My servant will be with me **in heaven**. My Father will honor anyone who serves me.

27 At this moment I feel greatly distressed. I should surely not say, 'Father, prevent me from experiencing this time **when I will suffer and die!**' No, **I will not do that,** because this is the

very reason I have lived up to this time when I will suffer and die. 28 Father, show how great you are!"

Then God spoke from heaven, "I have already shown how great I am; I will do it again!" 29 The crowd of people that was standing there heard the voice of God as well. Some of them said it was just the sound of thunder. Some other people said that an angel had spoken to Jesus. 30 Jesus replied to them, "The voice that you heard was God's voice. He did not speak for my benefit, but for yours! 31 Now is the time for God to judge the people in this world. Now is the time when he will throw out Satan, who is the one who rules this world. 32 As for me, when people raise me high on a cross, I will cause all peoples to come to me." 33 (He said this to let the people know the way he would soon die.)

34 The crowd of people then replied to him, "We have learned from Scripture that the Messiah will live forever. So why do you say that the Son of Man will be lifted up to die on a cross? Who is this 'Son of Man' you are speaking about?" 35 Jesus told them, "I am the light that reveals God's truth and goodness. I will be with you only a little longer. Live according to my example while I am still here in order to prevent the darkness that is sin and evil from controlling you. Those who live sinfully are like people who wander around in darkness, not knowing where they are going! 36 Trust in me, the light that reveals God's truth and goodness, while I am still with you. Do this in order to be God's people, those who know his truth and goodness."

After he said those things, Jesus left them and hid himself from the people. 37 Even though Jesus had done many miraculous signs in front of the people, most of them did not trust in him. 38 Their unbelief happened in order to make come true what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago:

> "Lord, no one has believed what we said!
>
> It seems like no one has seen the power that the Lord has revealed!" 39 They could not trust in Jesus for this reason: Isaiah had also written, 40 "The Lord has made them unable to perceive what they see,
>
> and he has made them stubborn.
>
> He has done this in order that they would not perceive what they see,

and would not truly understand,
and would not turn away from sin to God, and I would not forgive them."

41 Isaiah wrote that long ago, because he saw how great Jesus is and spoke concerning him.

42 Although this was true, many members of the highest Jewish governing council trusted in Jesus. Nevertheless, they did not tell others that they trusted in Jesus, because they feared that the Pharisees would ban them from entering the Jewish meeting place. 43 They feared this because they preferred that other people honor them rather than that God would honor them.

44 Jesus spoke loudly to a crowd of people, "Those who trust me are not only trusting me but also are trusting my Father, who sent me. 45 Those who see me are also seeing my Father, who sent me. 46 I came into this world as the light that reveals God's truth and goodness to everyone in the world in order that anyone who trusts in me will not stay in the darkness that is sin and evil.

47 I do not condemn anyone who listens to my teachings but refuses to obey them, because I did not come into this world in order to condemn the people in the world. Rather, I came into this world in order to save them from being punished for their sins. 48 Anyone who rejects me and does not accept and obey my teachings will be condemned according to the very teachings I have spoken. On the last day when God judges everyone, God will judge that person on the basis of my teachings. 49 This will happen because I did not speak on my own authority. Rather, my Father himself, who sent me, commanded me regarding what I should say and how I should say it. 50 I am certain that what my Father has commanded me to say is what people must believe in order to live forever in heaven. So I say exactly what my Father has told me to say."

13 1 On the day before the Passover celebration would begin, Jesus knew that it was the time for him to leave this world and to return to his Father. He always loved his disciples who were with him in this world, and he loved them to the uttermost. 2 When Jesus and his disciples were having their evening meal, the devil had already caused Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to think that he should help the Jewish leaders arrest Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that his Father had given him complete power and authority over everything, and he also knew that he came

from God and would soon return to God. 4 Because he knew those things, Jesus got up from the table where they were eating the evening meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 He poured some water into a large bowl and started washing his disciples' feet and wiping them dry with the towel that he had wrapped around his waist.

6 When he came to Simon Peter to wash his feet, Peter told him, "Lord, you should not wash my feet!" 7 Jesus replied to him, "Right now you do not understand what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said, "You will surely never wash my feet!" Jesus replied to him, "If I do not wash you, then you will not inherit God's blessings with me." 9 Simon Peter told him, "Lord, do not wash my feet only! Wash my hands and my head also!" 10 Jesus told him, "Anyone whom someone has washed only needs to wash his feet. The rest of his body is clean. You disciples are clean, but not all of you are clean." 11 (Jesus said this about being spiritually clean, because he knew who was going to help the Jewish leaders arrest him. That is the reason he said, "Not all of you are clean.")

12 After he finished washing their feet, he put his outer clothing on again. Then he sat down at the table again and told them, "You must understand what I have just done for you! 13 You rightly call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' because that is what I am. 14 Since I, your teacher and Lord, have humbly served you by washing your feet, you also should humbly serve each other by washing each other's feet. 15 By washing your feet I have given you an example to follow in order that you should humbly serve each other as I have humbly served you. 16 I am telling you the truth: Just as a servant is not more important than his master, nor is a messenger more important than the person who has sent him, you are not more important than me. 17 Since you now know that you should humbly serve each other, God will bless you if you do so.

18 I am not saying that all of you will be blessed. I know well the people whom I have chosen to be my disciples. However, what is about to happen must take place in order that what a prophet wrote in scripture can come true: 'The one who shared a meal with me as a friend has opposed me.'

19 From now on I am telling you what will happen before it happens in order that, when it does happen, you may trust that I am God. **20** I am telling you the truth: Whoever accepts the one I send out also accepts me; and whoever accepts me also accepts my Father who sent me."

21 After Jesus said this, he felt disturbed. He solemnly declared, "I am telling you the truth: One of you is going to give me up to my opponents." **22** His disciples kept looking at one another and wondering who among them he was talking about. **23** One of his disciples, John whom Jesus loved, was sitting at the table beside Jesus. **24** Simon Peter made a gesture to him to indicate that he should ask Jesus which disciple he was talking about. **25** So John leaned back against Jesus and quietly asked him, "Lord, who is the one who will betray you?"
26 Jesus replied, "It is the man to whom I will give this piece of bread after I dip it in the bowl." Then he dipped the bread in the bowl and gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son. **27** As soon as Judas took the piece of bread from Jesus, Satan took control of him. Jesus then told him, "Do quickly what you have planned to do." **28** (No one else among those sitting at the table knew why Jesus had said that to Judas. **29** Some of them thought that Jesus was telling him to go and buy some things that they needed for the Passover celebration or to give some money to the poor. They thought this because Judas had the bag that held their money.) **30** So after Judas took the bread from Jesus, he immediately went out. (It was night.)

31 So after Judas left, Jesus said, "Now God has shown people how great I, the Son of Man, am. I have also shown people how great God is. **32** God himself will show people how great I, the Son of Man, am, and he will do this right away.

33 You whom I love as though you were my children, I will be with you only a little while longer. Then you will look for me, but it will be just like I told the Jewish leaders and am telling you now: You will not be able to come to the place where I am going. **34** I now give you this new command in order that you might love each other: You must love each other in the same way that I have loved you. **35** If you love each other, everyone who sees that love will know that you are my disciples."

36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "You cannot go with me now to the place where I am going, but you will go there later." **37** Peter told him,

“Lord, why can I not go with you now? I am willing to die for you!” **38** Jesus replied, “You are not really willing to die for me! I am telling you the truth: You will surely say three times that you do not know me before the rooster crows **in the morning**!”

14 **1** “Do not be distressed. Trust God. Trust me as well. **2** There are many places for people to dwell where my Father dwells. If that were not true, I would have told you so, because I will go there to prepare a place for you to dwell. **3** And after I go there to prepare a place for you to dwell, I will return and take you to be with me, in order for you also to be with me where I am. **4** You know how to go to the place where I am going.”

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we have no idea where you are going! We cannot possibly know how to go there!” **6** Jesus told him, “I am how people can go there. I am the one who reveals what is true about God, and the one who gives eternal life to people. The only way people can come to my Father is by trusting me. **7** Since you know who I am, you know my Father also. From this time forward, you know him, and it is as though you have seen him.”

8 Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, let us see the Father and that will satisfy us!” **9** Jesus said to him, “I have been with you all for such a long time. Surely you know me, Philip! Those who have seen me are like those who have seen my Father. So you have no reason to say ‘Let us see the Father’! **10** You surely must believe that I and my Father are completely united! I did not speak all that I have spoken to you on my own. Rather, my Father who is united with me is working his own miraculous works through me. **11** Trust me when I say that I and my Father are completely united! Otherwise, if you are not going to trust what I say, at least trust me on account of all the miraculous works **that you have seen me do**. **12** I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will also do the miraculous works that I do. He will do even greater works than those I do, because I am going to my Father. **13** I will do anything that you request as my representative. I will do this in order that I, his Son, might show how great my Father is. **14** I will do anything that you request from me as my representative.

15 If you really love me, you will obey everything that I have commanded you. **16** Then I will request from my Father, and he will answer me by giving you another one to help you in order for him to be with you forever. **17** **He is** the Holy Spirit who declares what is true about God. The unbelieving people in the world cannot accept him, because they do not see him or

know him. You disciples know this Spirit because he dwells with you, and he will later dwell in you. 18 I will not leave you without anyone to take care of you. I will soon return to you. 19 In a little while the unbelievers in the world will not see me anymore, but you yourselves will see me again. Because I will soon live again, you too will live again. 20 When you see me again, you will know that I am united with my Father and that you and I are completely united. 21 Whoever knows and obeys what I command truly loves me. And my Father loves whoever loves me. I will love that person too, and I will reveal myself to that person."

22 Judas (not Judas Iscariot, **but a different disciple with the same name**) spoke to Jesus. **He said,** "Lord, what has changed to cause you to reveal yourself just to us and not to all the people in the world?" 23 Jesus replied to him, "Whoever loves me obeys my teaching. My Father will love that person. He and I will come to that person and dwell inside that person. 24 Whoever does not love me does not obey my teachings. What you have just heard me say I did not say on my own. Rather, **what I have said has come** from my Father, who has sent me. 25 I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But my Father will send the Holy Spirit in my place. He is the one who will help you. He will teach you all **of God's truth that you need to know**. He will also cause you to remember all the things that I have told you. 27 As I leave you I give you a peaceful feeling. It is my peaceful feeling that I am giving to you. I give to you **a peaceful feeling** in a different manner than the people in the world give it. Do not be distressed or afraid.

28 You heard me tell you that I am going away and will later return to you. If you really loved me, you would rejoice that I am returning to my Father **in heaven**, because he is superior to me. 29 I have told you these things now before they happen so that you will continue to trust me when they do happen. 30 I will not be able to talk with you much longer, because **Satan,** the one who rules this world, is coming. But he has no control over me. 31 However, this will happen in order for the people in the world to know that I love my Father and I will do exactly what my Father has commanded me to do. Rise, let us leave this place."

15 1 "I am like a genuine vine **that grows fruit**. My Father is like a gardener **who takes care of it**. 2 My Father cuts off and removes every branch that seems to be part of me but does not produce fruit. As for every branch that produces fruit, he cleans it by pruning it so that it may

produce even more fruit. 3 You are like branches that have already been cleaned by pruning because of the teaching that I have told you before. 4 Stay united with me, and I will stay united with you. As the branch cannot produce any fruit unless it stays attached to the vine, so you cannot produce spiritual fruit unless you stay united with me.

5 I am like the vine; you are like the branches. If you stay united with me and I stay united with you, you will produce a lot of fruit. **This is true** because you cannot do anything without my help. 6 As for anyone who does not stay united with me, that person is like a branch that the gardener cuts off and throws away. After such branches dry up, the gardener's workers pick them up and throw them into a fire and burn them up. 7 If you stay united with me and obey what I have taught you, you can request anything from God that you want, and he will grant your request. 8 You show people how great my Father is by producing a lot of fruit and being my disciples.

9 I have loved you in the same way that my Father has loved me. Now keep living in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love. 10 If you obey what I have commanded you, you will be acting in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love, just like I have obeyed what my Father has commanded me, and I act in a way that is appropriate for someone whom he loves. 11 I told you these things in order that you may be as joyful as I am and **in order that** you may be joyful to the greatest degree. 12 This is what I am commanding you to do: Love each other in the way that I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than a person who is willing to die for his friends. 14 You are really my friends if you keep doing what I have commanded you to do. 15 I am not going to call you my servants any longer, because a servant does not understand what his master is doing. I now call you friends, because I have made you understand everything that my Father has told me. 16 You did not choose **to be my disciples**. Rather, I chose you **to be my disciples** and assigned you **to this role** in order that you would go out and produce spiritual fruit and **in order that** the fruit you produce should last forever. **I also chose you** in order that my Father would give you everything that you request from him as my representatives. 17 I command you to do these things in order that you would love one another.

18 Since the people who oppose God in the world detest you, you must realize that they detested me first. 19 If you were part of the people who oppose God in the world, those unbelievers would love you as they love their own. However, I chose you to come out from

among them. The people who oppose God in the world detest you because you are not part of them. 20 Remember that I told you that a servant is not more important than his master. Since they have caused me to suffer, they will certainly cause you to suffer as well. If any of them have obeyed my teaching, they will also obey what you teach. 21 Yet the unbelievers in this world will do all these hateful things to you because you represent me and because they do not know my Father who has sent me here. 22 If I had not come and taught them God's truth, they would not have been guilty of rejecting me and my message. However, since I have come and taught them, now they do not have any excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever detests me also detests my Father. 24 If I had not performed miraculous works among them that no one else has ever done, they would not be guilty of sin. Yet, as it is, they have seen these works and detest me. They also detest my Father. 25 However, this has happened in order that these words that a prophet wrote in their scriptures would come true: 'They hated me for no reason.'

26 When I send to you from my Father the one who will help you, he will tell people who I am. He is the Holy Spirit, who declares what is true about God and goes forth from my Father. 27 You also must tell everyone about me, because you have been with me since the very first days when I began my work."

16 1 I told you about these things that will happen so that you would continue trusting in me when they do happen. 2 The Jews who oppose me will ban you from entering the Jewish meeting places. Yet something even worse will happen. The time is coming when all the people who will kill you will think that they are pleasing God by doing so. 3 They will do such things because they have never known who I really am, nor who my Father is. 4 I have told you about these things that will happen in order that when they happen, you will remember that I told you they would happen. I did not tell you about them in the very first days when I began my work, because I was with you then.

5 "Now I am going back to my Father who sent me. Yet now none of you is asking me where I am going! 6 You are very sad because I have told you these things. 7 Nevertheless, I now tell you true information: It is better for you that I leave than that I stay. This is true because if I do not leave, then the one who will help you will not come to you. However, If I go away, then I will send him to you. 8 When that one who will help comes, he will convict

people in the world of the sins they have committed. He will convict them of not being righteous, and he will convict them that God will judge them. 9 He will convict people of their sin, because they have sinned by not trusting in me. 10 He will convict people of not being righteous, because I am going back to my Father, and you will no longer see me as the example of how to be righteous. 11 He will convict people that God will judge them, because he has condemned Satan, who is the one who rules this world.

12 I want to tell you many more things. However, if I tell you now, you will not be able to accept them. 13 When the Holy Spirit, who declares what is true about God, comes, he will enable you to understand all the truth you need to know. He can do so because he will not speak from his own authority. Rather, he will say whatever he hears from God, and he will tell you ahead of time about things that will happen. 14 The Holy Spirit will show how great I am by telling you what he has heard from me. 15 Everything my Father has belongs to me. That is why I said that the Holy Spirit will tell you what he has heard from me.

16 After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again."
17 Some of his disciples then asked one another, "What does Jesus mean when he says to us, 'After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again'? And what does he mean when he says, 'Because I am going back to my Father'?" 18 So they kept asking, "What does 'after a short time' mean? We do not understand what he is saying."

19 Jesus recognized that his disciples wanted to ask him more questions. So he said to them, "You are asking each other what I meant when I said, 'After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again.' 20 I am telling you the truth: You will cry and mourn, but the people who oppose God in the world will rejoice. You will be very sad, but you will change from being sad to being joyful. 21 A woman experiences pain when she gives birth to a child, because it is the time for her to give birth. Yet she forgets that she suffered after she has given birth to the child, because she is joyful about the fact that she has brought a human being into the world. 22 In the same way, although you are sad at this time, I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will stop you from rejoicing. 23 When you see me again, you will not ask me anything. I am telling you the truth: My Father will give you whatever you request from him as my representatives. 24 Up to now you have not requested anything from my Father as my representatives. Request anything from my Father and you will

receive **whatever you request**. God will give it to you in order that you may be joyful to the greatest degree.

25 I have told you these things using figurative language, but there will soon be a time when I will not use that kind of language to speak with you anymore. Rather, I will tell you about my Father using language that you can easily understand. **26** When you see me again, you will request **anything from God** as my representatives, and I will not have to ask my Father on your behalf, **27** because my Father himself loves you because you love me and trust that I came here from God. **28** I came from my Father and entered this world. Again I tell you that I will leave this world and go back to my Father."

29 His disciples responded, "Finally! Now you are using language that we can easily understand and not using figurative language. **30** Now we understand that you know everything. There is no need for anyone to ask you questions **because you already know what that person will ask**. This is why we trust that you came here from God."

31 Jesus replied to them, "Now you finally trust me! **32** Look! There will soon be a time, and that time will be very soon, when others will scatter you everywhere. Each of you will go to his own home, and you will leave me by myself. However, I will not be by myself, because my Father is always with me. **33** I have told you all these things that will happen in order that you may feel peaceful **because you are united** with me. In this world you will be afflicted, but be brave! I have defeated the people who oppose God in the world!"

17 **1** After Jesus told his disciples about these things that would happen, he looked up toward heaven and said, "Father, it is now time **for me to suffer and die**. Show everyone how great I, your Son, am in order that I may show everyone how great you are. **2** **Please do this** because you gave me authority over all people in order that I might enable all those whom you chose to come to me to live forever **with me in heaven**. **3** This is what it means to live forever: to know you, who are the only real God, and to know me, Jesus the Messiah, the one whom you have sent into the world. **4** I have shown everyone how great you are while I have been on the earth. **I did this** by finishing the work that you assigned me to do. **5** Father, at this time show how great I am in your presence with the same greatness that I had in your presence before the time we created the world.

6 I have shown who you really are to the men whom you have given me from among the
people in the world. They belonged to you and you have given them to me. They have obeyed
your teaching. 7 At this time they know that everything you have given me has come from
you. 8 They know this because I have told them the teachings that you told me. They
themselves accepted those teachings, and they are certain that I came from you, and they
believe that you sent me here. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the people who
oppose you in the world. Rather, I am praying for those people whom you gave me, because
they belong to you. 10 All the disciples that are mine belong to you, and all the disciples that
belong to you are mine. They show everyone how great I am. 11 I will not stay in this sinful
world any longer. However, my disciples are staying in it. I will soon return to you. My Father,
who is set apart, keep them safe by your same power that you gave to me, in order that they
may be united in the same way that we are united. 12 During the time that I have been with
them, I have kept them safe by your same power that you gave to me. I have guarded them,
and only one of them will be eternally ruined. He is the one whom you had destined to be
eternally ruined in order that the scriptures would come true.

13 At this time I am about to return to you. I have said these things while I am in this sinful
world in order that I may give them my complete joy. 14 I have told them your teaching. Thus
the people who oppose you in the world have detested them because, like me, they do not belong
to those who oppose you. 15 I am not requesting that you take my disciples out of this sinful
world. Rather, I am requesting that you keep them safe from being harmed by Satan, the evil
one. 16 Like me, they do not belong to the people who oppose you in the world. 17 Set my
disciples apart to serve you by enabling them to know and live according to what is true. Your
teaching is what is true. 18 I am sending them among the people in the world in the same way
that you sent me among them. 19 I set myself apart as a sacrifice on their behalf in order that
they also may set themselves apart to serve you by knowing and living according to what is
true."

20 Now I am praying not only for these disciples here, but I am praying also for those
people who will trust in me by means of what my disciples say. 21 I pray that they may all be
united in the same way that you, my Father, and I are completely united. I pray that they may
also be united to us in order that the people in the world might know that you sent me here.

22 In order that they may be united in the same way that we are united, I have honored the people who trust in me just like you honored me. 23 This means that I am united with them, and you are united with me. I have done this in order that they may be completely united together in order that the people in the world may know that you sent me here and that you love the people who trust in me in the same way that you love me.

24 "My Father, I want these people whom you have given to me to be with me where I will be in heaven in order that they can see how glorious I am. You made me glorious because you have loved me from before the time when we created the universe.

25 My Father, who always does what is right, the people who oppose you in the world do not know who you are, but I know who you are. These people who trust me know that you have sent me here. 26 I have made them know who you are. I will continue to do so in order that they may love others like you love me and in order that I may be united with them."

18 1 After Jesus finished praying, he left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side of the valley they entered into a grove of olive trees.

2 Judas is the one who was about to help Jesus' opponents arrest him. He knew the place where Jesus was because Jesus often went there with his disciples. 3 So Judas brought to that grove a group of Roman soldiers and some temple guards who had been sent by the ruling priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lamps, and weapons. 4 Because Jesus knew what was going to happen to him, he went forward and asked the soldiers and temple guards, "Who are you looking for?" 5 They replied to him, "Jesus from Nazareth." Jesus told them, "I am that person." (Judas was standing with them. He was the one who was helping Jesus' opponents arrest him.) 6 When Jesus told them, "I am that person," they stepped back and involuntarily fell down to the ground. 7 Jesus then asked them again, "Who are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus from Nazareth." 8 Jesus replied, "I told you that I am that person. Since I am the one whom you are looking for, let these other men go." 9 (This happened in order that these words that he had said to his Father would come true: "I did not lose even one of those whom you gave me.")

10 Simon Peter had a short sword. He took it out of its sheath and struck the high priest's servant with it, cutting off his right ear. Malchus was that servant's name. **11** Jesus then told Peter, "Put your short sword back into its sheath! I must surely suffer in the way that my Father has planned for me **to suffer**!"

12 The group of Roman soldiers, along with their leader and some of the temple guards from the Jewish leaders, seized Jesus and tied his hands. **13** Then they took him to Annas first, because he was Caiaphas's father-in-law, and Caiaphas was the high priest that year. **14** (It was Caiaphas who had advised the other Jewish leaders that it would be much better to have one man die on behalf of the people **than to let the Romans kill them**.)

15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did one other disciple. Annas the high priest knew the other disciple, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard **when the soldiers and guards took** Jesus there. **16** However, Peter had to stay outside at the door. Therefore, that disciple who knew the high priest went out again and spoke to the servant girl who was watching the door. Then he was allowed to bring Peter into **the courtyard**. **17** That servant girl who was watching the door then told Peter, "You are surely one of the disciples of the man **whom they have arrested**!" He replied, "No, I am not!" **18** (It was cold, so the high priest's servants and the temple guards made a fire and were standing and warming themselves around it. Peter was also standing and warming himself there with them.)

19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and what he had been teaching them. **20** Jesus replied to him, "I have spoken in public to everyone **who would listen**. I have always taught in the Jewish meeting places and in the temple. **I have taught in the places** where many Jews gather. I have never said anything secretly. **21** You should not ask me! Ask the people who heard what I taught them. They certainly know what I said." **22** After Jesus said this, one of the temple guards who was standing near him slapped him. He said, "You should not answer the high priest like that!" **23** Jesus replied to him, "If what I said was wrong, tell me what it was. However, if what I said was right, you should not slap me." **24** Then Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, the other high priest, while his hands were still tied.

25 Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself **in the courtyard**, when someone said to him, "You are surely also one of the disciples of this man whom they have

arrested!" Peter denied this and said, "No, I am not!" **26** One of the high priest's servants was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. He said to Peter, "Surely I saw you in the **olive tree** grove with the man whom they have arrested!" **27** Peter then again denied **that he had been with Jesus**. A rooster crowed immediately **after he did that**.

28 The Jewish leaders then brought Jesus from Caiaphas' house to the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman governor. (It was early morning. The Jewish leaders did not enter Pilate's headquarters **because Pilate was not a Jew. If they entered a non-Jew's home, they thought** they would defile themselves and be unable to eat the Passover celebration meal.) **29** So Pilate came out to talk to them. He asked them, "What are you accusing this man of doing?" **30** The Jewish leaders replied, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you!" **31** So Pilate told them, "You yourselves take him and judge him by your own law." The Jewish leaders replied, "We want to execute him, but your Roman law prevents us from doing that." **32** (This happened in order that what Jesus had said about how he would soon die would come true.)

33 Pilate then went back inside his headquarters. He commanded soldiers to bring Jesus to him, and he asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" **34** Jesus replied, "Are you asking me this question because you thought of it yourself, or did others tell you this concerning me?" **35** Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew! Your own countrymen and the ruling priests brought you to me. What wrong have you done?" **36** Jesus replied, "The kingdom that I rule over does not belong to this sinful world. If it did, my servants would have fought in order to prevent the Jewish leaders from arresting me. But, as it is, the kingdom that I rule over does not belong to this sinful world." **37** Then Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus replied, "You yourself say so. This is why I was born into this world: I came in order to tell people what is true about God. Everyone who believes what is true about God accepts and obeys what I say." **38** Pilate said to him, "Nobody knows what is really true!"

After Pilate said that, he went outside and talked to the Jewish leaders again. He told them, "I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law. **39** However, you Jews have a custom: Every year during the Passover celebration you ask me, and I release to you someone who is in prison. So do you want me to release your king to you?" **40** The Jewish leaders then

shouted again, “No, do not release this man, but release Barabbas!” (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

19 **1** So at that time Pilate ordered his soldiers to take Jesus and beat him with whips.

2 The soldiers also took some branches with thorns on them and wound them together to make something like a crown. Then they put it on Jesus’ head and put a purple robe on him in order to mock him. **3** They kept approaching him and jeering at him, saying, “We salute you, King of the Jews!” and kept slapping his face.

4 Pilate came outside again and said to the Jewish leaders, “Look, I am about to bring him out to you in order that you can know that I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law.” **5** So Jesus came out. He was wearing the crown made of branches with thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, “Look, here is the man!” **6** When the ruling priests and temple guards saw Jesus, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate told them, “You yourselves take him and crucify him! As for me, I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law.” **7** The Jewish leaders replied to Pilate, “We have a certain law that says he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.” **8** When Pilate heard that, he was more afraid than before of what would happen to himself if he condemned Jesus to die. **9** He entered his headquarters once more and commanded the soldiers to bring Jesus back inside. Then he asked Jesus, “Where did you come from?” However, Jesus did not answer his question. **10** So Pilate said to him, “You should answer me! You surely know that I have the power to release you, and I also have the power to crucify you!” **11** Jesus replied to him, “The only power you have over me is the power that God has given you. So the man who brought me to you has committed a worse sin than you are committing.”

12 From that moment on, Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. However, the Jewish leaders cried out, “If you release this man, you are not loyal to Caesar! Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” **13** So when Pilate heard that, he ordered his soldiers to bring Jesus out. Then Pilate sat down to pronounce a verdict on the seat where he usually pronounced verdicts. This was at a place people called “The Stone Pavement,” which was “Gabbatha” in the language spoken by the Jews. **14** (It was the day before the Passover celebration, which was the day when the Jewish people prepared for the celebration. It was almost noon.) Pilate said to the

Jewish leaders, “Look, here is your king!” **15** They shouted, “Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!” Pilate **mocked** them by saying, “Should I **order my soldiers to** crucify your king?” The ruling priests replied, “Caesar is our only king!” **16** Then, because of what they said, Pilate ordered his soldiers to crucify Jesus. Then the soldiers took Jesus away **in order to crucify him**.

17 Jesus went out, carrying his cross by himself to the place that people called “The Place of a Skull,” which was “Golgotha” in the language spoken by the Jews. **18** The soldiers crucified him at that place. They also crucified two other men with him. One man was on either side of Jesus, so that Jesus was between them.

19 Pilate also **ordered someone** to write a notice on a board and fasten it to Jesus’ cross. **That person** wrote on it, “Jesus from Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” **20** Many Jewish people read this notice because the place where the soldiers crucified Jesus was close to the city of Jerusalem and **because** someone wrote the notice in three languages, which were the languages spoken by Jews, Romans, and Greeks. **21** The ruling Jewish priests returned to Pilate and said, “You should not have written on that notice, ‘The King of the Jews.’ Rather, **you should have written,** ‘This man said that he is the King of the Jews’.” **22** Pilate replied, “What I **ordered my soldiers** to write on the notice is what they have written. **I will not change it.**” **23** After the soldiers had put Jesus on the cross, they took his clothes and divided them into four equal parts, one part was for each soldier. **However, they kept his** tunic **separate**. The weaver had woven this tunic from top to bottom from one piece of cloth that did not have any seams. **24** So the soldiers said to each other, “Let us not tear this tunic. Instead, let us decide who will keep it by gambling **and giving it to the winner**.” That occurred in order to make this scripture come true:

> “They divided my clothes among them.
> They gambled for my clothing.”

That is why the soldiers did those things.

25 Jesus’ mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were all standing near the cross that he was hanging on. **26** When Jesus saw his mother **standing there** and the disciple John whom Jesus loved standing near her, he told his mother, “Madam, here is the one who will take care of you like a son would.” **27** Next, he said to John, “Here is

the one whom you will take care of like you would your own mother!" From that moment, John took her to live in his own home.

28 A little while later, because Jesus knew that he had already done everything that God had sent him to do, **and** in order to make another **prophecy in** scripture come true, he said, "I am thirsty!" **29** Someone had put a jar containing cheap wine there **and Jesus was thirsty**. So the soldiers took a reed from a hyssop plant and put a sponge on it. **Then they dipped the sponge** in the cheap wine and held it up to Jesus' mouth. **30** So Jesus drank the cheap wine and then said, "I have completed **everything that I came here to do**!" And he bowed his head and voluntarily died.

31 The Jewish leaders then asked Pilate to **order his soldiers to** break the legs of the three men on crosses **so that the men would die more quickly** and take away their bodies in order that the bodies would not remain on the crosses during the Jewish day for rest. **They asked this** because it was the day when the Jewish people prepared for the Passover celebration **and the day for rest, and leaving dead bodies on crosses during those days violated Jewish law**. (Since the next day was also the day for rest, it was a very important day.) **32** So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man, who had been crucified at the same time as Jesus. **Then they broke the legs** of the other man. **33** However, when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was dead already. So they did not break his legs. **34** Instead, one of the soldiers stabbed Jesus' side with a spear, and right away blood and water poured out **of the wound**. **35** (I, John, am the one who saw this happen and have testified about it and what I have testified is true. I am certain that I am saying what is true; I say it in order that you may trust in Jesus as well.) **36** These things happened **to Jesus' body** in order to make **this prophecy in** scripture come true: "No one will break any of his bones."

37 **They** also **made** another **prophecy in** scripture **come true**. It states: "They will look at the man whom they have stabbed."

38 After these things happened, Joseph, who was a man originally from the city of Arimathea, asked Pilate to allow him to take away Jesus' body. **He did this** because he was one of Jesus' disciples. However, he did not tell anyone that, because he was afraid of the other Jewish leaders. Pilate allowed Joseph to take away Jesus' body, so Joseph went and did so. **39** Nicodemus also came. **He was the man** who had once come **and spoken** with Jesus at night.

He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloe spices to prepare Jesus' body for burial. Those spices weighed about 33 kilograms. 40 They took Jesus' body and wrapped strips of linen cloth around it and put the myrrh and aloe spices under the strips of cloth. They did this according to the Jewish customs about burying bodies. 41 (There was a garden near the place where the soldiers had crucified Jesus. In the garden was a newly made burial cave. No one had yet buried anyone in that cave.) 42 So they put Jesus' body in that tomb because it was nearby and because it was the day when the Jewish people prepared for the Passover celebration so they had to bury the body before sundown.

20 1 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb where they had buried Jesus. She saw that someone had moved the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. 2 So she ran to where Simon Peter and the other disciple, John, whom Jesus loved, were staying. She told them, "Some people have removed the Lord Jesus' body from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put it!" 3 When they heard this, Peter and John left where they were staying and went to the tomb. 4 They were both running, but John ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb before him. 5 When John bent down and looked into the tomb, he saw the strips of linen cloth that they had wrapped around Jesus' body lying where his body had lain, but he did not go into the tomb. 6 Simon Peter was running behind John. He arrived there as well and went inside the tomb. He also saw the strips of linen cloth lying where Jesus' body had lain. 7 Peter also saw the cloth that someone had wrapped around Jesus' head. It was not lying with the strips of linen cloth. Rather, someone had folded it and set it apart from them. 8 Then John, that other disciple who had reached the tomb before Peter, went inside as well. He saw these things and believed that Jesus had become alive again. 9 (At that time they did not understand what the prophets had written in those scriptures which said that Jesus had to die and become alive again.)

10 The disciples then returned to the places where they were staying in Jerusalem. 11 Mary Magdalene remained standing and crying outside of the tomb. While she was crying, she bent down and looked inside the tomb. 12 She saw two angels wearing white clothing. They were sitting on the place where people had laid Jesus' body. One angel was sitting on the place where Jesus' head had been. The other angel was sitting on the place where Jesus' feet had been. 13 They asked her, "Madam, why are you crying?" She told them, "I am crying because

some people have removed my Lord Jesus' body **from this tomb**, and I do not know where they have put it!" **14** After she said that, she turned around and saw someone standing there. **It was Jesus,** but she did not recognize him. **15** He asked her, "Madam, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She thought that the man speaking to her was the gardener, so she told him, "Sir, if you have carried Jesus' body away, tell me where you have put it. I will take it **and bury it again**." **16** Jesus **called her by name,** saying, "Mary!" She turned **toward him again and** said to him, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher" in the language spoken by the Jews). **17** Jesus told her, "Stop clinging to me, because I have not yet returned to **heaven to be with** my Father. Go to the disciples, my brothers, and tell them that I am about to return to **heaven to be with** my God and Father, who is also your God and Father." **18** Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord Jesus!" **She** also told them what Jesus had told her.

19 On the evening of that same Sunday, the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were staying, because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus suddenly arrived and stood among them. He told them, "May God give you peace!" **20** After he said this, he showed his disciples the wounds that were in his hands and side. They were very happy when they saw the Lord Jesus! **21** Jesus then told them a second time, "May God give you peace! I am sending you **into the world** just like my Father sent me." **22** After he said this, Jesus blew on them and said, "Accept the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive anyone's sins, God will forgive that person for those sins. If you do not forgive someone's sins, God will not forgive that person for those sins."

24 Thomas, one of Jesus' 12 representatives, whom they called "The Twin," was not there among his other disciples while Jesus was there among them. **25** The other disciples told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord Jesus!" However, he told them, "I will only believe you if I see the holes in his hands that were caused by nails and put my fingers in them and if I put my hand into the wound on his side **that was made by a spear**."

26 Eight days later, Jesus' disciples were again inside a house, and this time Thomas was with them. Although they had locked the doors, Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "May God give you peace!" **27** Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger into the holes here, and see the holes in my hands, and put out your hand, and place it in the wound in my side! Stop doubting **that I became alive again**. Rather, believe **that it is true**!" **28** Thomas

replied, “You are my Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus told him, “Now you believe **that I have become alive again** because you see me. God **surely** blesses those who have not seen me but yet believe **that I have become alive again**.”

30 Now Jesus also did many other miraculous signs while his disciples were with him, **but** I did not write about them in this book. **31** Nevertheless, I have written about the signs in this book in order that you may trust that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. **I also wrote about these things** in order that, by trusting **that Jesus is the Messiah**, you may have eternal life through him.

21

1 After those things happened, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, **which is also known as the Sea of Galilee**. This is how he appeared to them: **2** Simon Peter, Thomas (whom they called “The Twin”), Nathaniel (who was from Cana, which is a town in the region of Galilee), the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two of Jesus’ other disciples were together. **3** Simon Peter told the other disciples with him, “I am going to catch some fish.” They told him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat **and fished**, but they did not catch any fish that night. **4** At dawn the next morning Jesus stood on the shore of the sea, but the disciples who were fishing did not know that it was him. **5** Jesus then called to them, “Dear friends, you do not have any fish, do you?” They replied, “We do not.” **6** He told them, “Throw your net off the right side of the boat and you will catch some fish.” So they did so, and they caught so many fish that they were not able to pull the net **into the boat**. **7** I, the disciple whom Jesus loved, then told Peter, “It is the Lord Jesus!” So when Simon Peter heard this, he put on his coat (he had taken it off to work) and jumped into the water **to swim to the shore**. **8** The rest of the disciples who had been fishing came to the shore in the boat, while pulling the net full of fish **behind the boat**. (They were not far from the shore, only 90 meters away.) **9** When they reached the shore, they saw a fire **that Jesus had prepared** and a fish he was cooking on it. **There was** also a loaf of bread. **10** Jesus told them, “Bring **over here** some of those fish that you have just caught!” **11** So Simon Peter went back **to the boat** and dragged the net to the shore. **It was** full of 153 large fish. Even though there were so many fish, the net did not tear. **12** Jesus told them, “Come **here and** eat breakfast!” None of the disciples were bold enough to ask him who he was. They knew it was the Lord Jesus. **13** Jesus

came and took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. **14** (This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after God had caused him to become alive again.)

15 When they finished eating breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these **others love me**?" Peter replied to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Take care of those who trust in me." **16** Jesus asked him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He replied to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Take care of those who trust in me." **17** Jesus asked him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times if he loved him. Peter replied to him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Take care of those who trust in me. **18** I am telling you the truth: When you were young, you put your own clothes on, and you walked wherever you wanted to go. However, when you are old, you will extend your hands away from your body, and someone else will put clothes on you and take you where you do not want to go." **19** (Jesus said this to indicate how Peter would die in order to show people how great God is). Then Jesus told him, "Come be my disciple!"

20 When Peter turned around, he saw John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, walking behind them. John was the one who had leaned close to Jesus during the dinner **before Jesus died** and asked, "Lord, who is going to betray you?" **21** So when Peter saw John, he asked Jesus, "Lord, what is going to happen to this man?" **22** Jesus said to him, "If I want him to continue living until I return, that is not your concern! As for you, **continue to** be my disciple!" **23** Because **Jesus said this**, the rumor that the disciple John was not going to die was repeated among the believers. However, Jesus did not tell Peter that John would not die. Rather, he said, "If I want him to continue living until I return, that is not your concern!"

24 I, John, am the disciple who is testifying about all these things, and I have written them down in this book. We know that what I have testified is true.

25 Jesus also did so many other things that if people wrote down every one of them, I suppose that the whole world would not even be big enough to contain the books that those people would write about them.

Acts

1

1 Dear Theophilus,

In the first book that I wrote for you, I told about many of Jesus' actions and teachings. **2** I told you about those things up to the moment when God took Jesus up to heaven. Before Jesus went to heaven, he gave instructions to his chosen Representatives as the Holy Spirit guided him. **3** Even though the Romans executed Jesus on a cross, God made him alive again. Jesus then went to his Representatives and other disciples and proved to them in many convincing ways that he truly was alive again. He met with them at different times over a period of 40 days. He talked with them about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere.

4 One time while Jesus was with his disciples, he told them, "I want you to stay here in the city of Jerusalem and wait until God our Father sends his Spirit to you. As I told you, he promised that he would do that. **5** John baptized people in water, but within a few days God is going to baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

6 One day when the Representatives were meeting together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you now become our king so that we Israelite people will have our own king once again?" **7** He replied to them, "You do not need to know when that will happen. God my Father alone has decided when he will make me king." **8** But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, he will enable you to tell people about me powerfully. You will do this here in the city of Jerusalem. You will do it in the nearby regions of Judea and Samaria. But you will also do it all over the world. **9** After he said that, he started to rise up into heaven while they watched. But then a cloud blocked their view so that they could no longer see him.

10 While they were still staring toward the sky as Jesus was going up, suddenly two angels in human form stood beside them. Their clothes shone brightly. **11** One of the angels said, "You men who come from Galilee, you do not need to look up at the sky any longer! Someday this same Jesus, whom God took from you up into heaven, will come back to earth. He will return in the same way that you just now saw him go up to heaven."

12 Then **after the two angels left**, the Representatives returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is a short distance from Jerusalem. **13** After they entered the city, they went into the upstairs room **in the house** where they were staying. Those who were there included Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew. They also included another man named James, who was the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas, who was the son of yet another man named James. **14** All these men prayed together regularly and frequently. Others who prayed with them included the women who had traveled with Jesus; Mary, who was Jesus' mother; and his younger brothers.

15 Now about 120 people were meeting together at that place. At one of the meetings, Peter stood up among his fellow believers **because he was going to say something important**. He said, **16** "You who believe as I do, there are words that King David wrote in the Scriptures long ago that had to happen as he said they would. The Holy Spirit, who knew that Judas would show Jesus' enemies where to find him and arrest him, inspired David to write those words. **17** But Jesus had chosen Judas, along with the rest of us, to represent him. **So we need to find someone else to take his place.**"

18 This is how Judas died. The Jewish leaders gave Judas money for betraying Jesus. He used that money to buy a field **and he went to that field to kill himself because he felt so badly about what he had done to Jesus**. As he killed himself, his body landed with such force on that field that his abdomen burst open and all his intestines spilled out. **19** The news about this spread widely among the people of Jerusalem. When they heard about it, they gave that field a new name. In their Aramaic language it was Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood." **They gave it that name because it was where someone had died.**

20 Peter also said, "What happened to Judas is like what we read in the book of Psalms: 'May his home become empty, with no one living in it.' These other words in the Psalms also refer to him: 'Let someone else take over his work as a leader.'"

21 "So we need to identify all the men who were with us during the whole time when the Lord Jesus was with us. **22** **They need to have been with us** from the time when John the Baptizer began his work until the day when Jesus left us and rose up to heaven. One such man must **replace Judas and** join us in telling people about Jesus and how God caused him to live again after he died."

23 So the people who were meeting together suggested two men who could replace Judas. One man was Joseph the son of Sabbas, who also had the name Justus. The other man was Matthias. **24-25** Then they prayed: "Lord Jesus, Judas stopped representing you as he should have. He has now gone to the place where he deserves to be. You know what every person thinks privately. So please show us which of these two men you have chosen to take the place of Judas as your Representative." **26** Then they cast lots to choose between the two of them. The lot indicated that Matthias was the one to replace Judas. So he became a Representative along with the 11 others.

2 **1** On the day when the Jews were celebrating the Pentecost festival, the believers were all together in one place **in the city of Jerusalem**. **2** Suddenly, they heard a noise coming from the sky that sounded like a wind blowing loudly. Everyone in the entire house where they were sitting heard the noise. **3** Then they saw what looked like burning flames. These flames separated from one another and came to rest on each of the believers. **4** Then the Holy Spirit empowered all of the believers. They began to speak in languages they had never learned. The Spirit was making it possible for them to do that fluently.

5 At that time many Jews were staying in Jerusalem **to celebrate the Pentecost festival**. They were Jewish people who sincerely worshiped God. They had come from many different countries around the world. **6** When they heard this loud noise, a large crowd **of these Jews** gathered **at the place where the believers were**. The people in the crowd were amazed because they were each hearing the believers speak in their own languages. **7** They were all completely amazed, and they said to each other, "Listen, all these people who are speaking have come from Galilee. **So they cannot possibly know our languages!** **8** But all of us hear them speaking our own native languages! **9** Some of us are people from the regions of Parthia and Media and Elam. Others of us are from the regions of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. **10** There are some people here from the regions of Phrygia and Pamphylia, from the country of Egypt, and from the regions in Libya that are near the city of Cyrene. There are others of us who are here visiting Jerusalem from Rome. **11** They include native Jews as well as non-Jews who have chosen to believe and practice what Jews believe. And others of us are from the island of Crete and from the region of Arabia. And yet we can hear these people speaking in all our different languages about the mighty works that God has done!" **12** The people wondered

about what was happening and did not know what to think about it. So they asked one another, "What is happening here?" 13 But some of them made fun of what they saw. They said, "These people are talking like this because they have drunk too much wine!"

14 In response, Peter stood up with all the other Representatives and spoke loudly to the crowd of people. He said, "You Jewish people and all of you others who live here in Jerusalem, listen to me and I will explain to you what is happening! 15 Some of you think that we are drunk, but we are not drunk. It is only nine o'clock in the morning, and people here never get drunk at this time of the day! 16 Instead, what has happened to us is the miraculous thing that the prophet Joel wrote about long ago. He wrote:

17 'During the last days,' God says, 'I will give my Holy Spirit to all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will tell people my messages. I will give visions to the young men, and I will give inspired dreams to the old men. 18 During those days I will give my Holy Spirit to my servants, both men and women, so they can tell people my messages. 19 I will cause things to happen in the sky that will make people marvel. I will cause things to happen on the earth that will show that great events are going to take place. Here on the earth there will be blood, fire, and smoke everywhere. 20 In the sky the sun will appear dark to people and the moon will appear red to them. Those things will happen before the momentous time when I, the Lord God, come to judge everyone. 21 But even though I am coming to judge and punish sin, I will save all those who repent and ask me to forgive their sins.'"

22 Peter continued speaking. He said, "You Israelites, listen to me! When Jesus from Nazareth lived among you, God proved to you that he had sent him by enabling him to do many amazing miracles. These showed that he was from God. You yourselves know that this is true. 23 Even though you knew that, you urged people who do not obey God's law to take action to kill Jesus. They did that by nailing him to a cross. However, God had already planned for that to happen, and he knew what the results would be, so he allowed it. 24 Jesus died, but God caused him to become alive again and no longer dead, because it was not possible for him to stay dead.

25 Long ago King David wrote what the Messiah said:

‘I knew that you, Lord God, would always be there to protect me. You are right beside me,
so I will not be afraid of those who want to harm me. **26** Because of that, I am happy, and I
joyfully praise you, O God. And I am completely confident **that you will cause me to become
alive again after I die**. **27** I am confident because I know that you will not make me remain in
the place where the dead are. You will not even let my body waste away, because you have
chosen me for a special purpose. **28** You have shown me how to live again. You will make me
very happy because you will be with me **forever**.’”

29 **Peter continued,** “You who are Jews like me, I can tell you confidently that our ancient
ruler, King David, died and that his subjects buried him. In fact, his body is still here now at
the place where they buried him. **30** So we know that King David was not talking about
himself in this psalm. Instead, he was a prophet, and he knew that God promised to him that
one of his descendants would become king after him. **31** A long time ago, David knew what
God would do. He said that God would cause Jesus the Messiah to live again after he died.
God would not allow him to remain in a grave. God would not even let him be dead long
enough for his body to begin to decompose.

32 After this man Jesus had died, God made him alive again. All of us who are standing
here before you can testify to this. **We all saw him alive after he had died.** **33** So we are not
babbling drunkenly. Instead, this is what has happened. God has greatly honored Jesus by
causing Jesus to rule where God himself is, in heaven. Jesus has received the Holy Spirit from
God his Father, just as God promised. And now Jesus has generously given us the Holy Spirit,
and God has confirmed that gift by doing this miracle that you are witnessing. **34** We know
that David was not speaking about himself, because David did not go up into heaven **as Jesus
did**. Besides that, David himself said this about the Messiah:

> ‘The Lord God said to my Lord the Messiah, “I will honor you by giving you a
> **35** position next to me while I completely defeat your enemies.”””

36 **Peter ended by saying,** “So I want every Israelite to know definitely that God has made
Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this same Jesus whom you had nailed to a cross and killed.”

37 When the people heard what Peter said, they knew they had done wrong. The people
asked him and the other Representatives, “Can you men tell us what God wants us to do?”

38 Peter answered them, “Each of you should turn away from your sinful behavior. If you
now believe in what Jesus, the Messiah, has done for you, we will baptize you, showing that
God has forgiven your sins, and he will give you his Holy Spirit. **39** You will receive the Holy
Spirit because God has promised to give him to you and to your children and to all others
whom the God we worship leads to have faith in Jesus. That includes all those who live far
away from here.” **40** Peter said many more things and spoke strongly to them. He told them,
“Ask God to save you so that he will not punish you when he punishes these evil people **who
have rejected Jesus**!”

41 So the people who believed Peter’s message received baptism. There were about 3,000
of them who joined the group of believers that day. **42** They continually obeyed what the
Representatives taught. They met many times together with the other believers, and they ate a
meal and prayed together every day.

43 Throughout Jerusalem people came to have a great awe for God, because the
Representatives were doing many kinds of miraculous deeds. **44** All of those who believed in
Jesus met regularly together. They also kept sharing what they had with one another. **45** From
time to time some of them sold some of their land and some of the other things that they
owned. They did this so that they could give some of the money they made to other believers.
They gave those believers as much as they needed. **46** Every day they kept gathering to
worship together in the temple courtyard, and then they would have meals together in their
homes. They ate together happily and with genuine affection. **47** As they did so, they kept
praising God, and the other people who lived in Jerusalem greatly respected them. **As those
things were happening,** every day the Lord Jesus saved more people and those people joined
with the other believers.

3 **1** One day Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. It was three o’clock in the
afternoon, the time when people prayed there. **2** There was a man there who had not been able
to walk from the time he was born. He was sitting by the Beautiful Gate at the entrance to the
temple area. People carried him there every day so that he could ask those who were going into
the temple area to give him some money.

3 As Peter and John were approaching that gate, he saw them and asked them to give him
some money. 4 When they heard the man speak to them, Peter and John looked directly at him,
and Peter said to him, “Look at us!” 5 So he looked directly at them, expecting to get some
money from them. 6 Then Peter said to him, “I do not have any money, but I will do what I
can do for you. I heal you by the power of Jesus the Messiah, that man who came from the city
of Nazareth. So get up and walk!” 7 Then Peter grasped the man’s right hand and helped him
to stand up. The man realized immediately that his feet and ankles were going to be strong
enough to support him. 8 So the man jumped **the rest of the way** up **by himself** and started
walking! He went into the temple area with Peter and John, leaping for joy and praising God as
he walked!

9 All the people who were there saw him walking and heard him praising God. 10 They
recognized that he was the man who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate that led into the temple
area and ask people for money! So all the people there were greatly amazed that he could now
walk. 11 The man would not let go of Peter and John. The three of them were in Solomon’s
Porch**, a covered walkway within the temple area**. As the amazing news of the man’s healing
spread through the crowd, more and more people came running over to see them.

12 When Peter saw that a crowd was gathering around them, he said to the people, “You
Israelites, it should not surprise you that this man can now walk. But you should not be looking
at us as if we were so godly that we made him walk by our own power! 13 **Let me tell you what
has really happened.** God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We Israelites are
descendants of those men, so the covenant includes us. God honored that covenant by sending
Jesus to be the Messiah. **We told this man that the power of Jesus could heal him, and** God has
now glorified Jesus by doing this miracle. But when Jesus was living among us, you turned
him over to the Romans for trial. Pilate, the Roman governor, **knew that Jesus was innocent and**
wanted to set him free. But you gathered in front of Pilate and shouted that he should not
release him. 14 Rather than have Pilate release Jesus to you, even though Jesus was the
Messiah, you rejected him and asked Pilate to set free a killer instead! 15 So you are
responsible for the death of Jesus, the one who gives people life. But God brought him back to
life after he died. We can testify that we saw Jesus many times after he became alive again.
16 You recognize this man whom you see standing here. **He is the man who used to beg for alms
at the Beautiful Gate.** He is now strong enough to stand on his own because he believed in what

Jesus could do. Yes, it is because he trusted in Jesus that he is now completely healthy. All of you saw this happen.

17 Now, my countrymen, I know that you and your leaders killed Jesus because you did not know that he was the Messiah. **18** God said through the prophets ahead of time that the Messiah he would send would suffer and die. And now, by what has happened, he has fulfilled what the prophets said. **19** So stop living sinful lives and ask God to help you do what pleases him. Then God will completely forgive you for sinning against him. **20** If you do that, there will be times when you will know that the Lord God is helping you. And some day he will send back to earth the Messiah whom he has given to you. That person is Jesus. **21** Jesus will certainly stay in heaven until the time when God causes all that he created to become new. Long ago God promised to do that, and he chose holy prophets to tell that to people. **22** For example, **the prophet** Moses said this **about the Messiah**: 'The Lord our God will make one of you Israelites a prophet like me. You must do everything he tells you to do. **23** Those who do not do what that prophet tells them will no longer belong to God's people. God will destroy them.'" **24** **Peter continued,** "In fact, all the prophets have told about what would happen during the times we are now living in. Those prophets include Samuel and the ones who lived after him, who all spoke about these events before they happened. **25** What the prophets said long ago applies to you today. And the solemn agreement that God made to bless our ancestors also extends to you, their descendants. He said to Abraham **about the Messiah**, 'I will bless all the people groups on the earth as a result of what your descendant will do.' **26** So when God sent Jesus to the earth as the Messiah, he had him come to you Israelites first. God intended for the Messiah to bless you by getting you to stop doing things that were wrong."

4 **1** While Peter and John were still speaking to the people, several men walked up and confronted them. They included priests who served in the temple, the officer in charge of the temple guard, and some members of the Sadducee group. **2** These men were very angry because these two men were teaching the people. They were telling the people that what God did for Jesus shows that God causes people to live again after they die. **3** So these men arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. They did this because it was already evening, and the Jewish council would have to wait until the next day to question them. **4** However, many

people who had heard Peter speak put their faith in Jesus. The number of men who believed in Jesus increased to about 5,000.

5 The next day the high priest called the other chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and the other members of the Jewish council. They all assembled in one place in Jerusalem. **6** Annas, the former high priest, was there. Caiaphas, the new high priest, was also there. And so were John and Alexander and other men who were related to the high priest. **7** They commanded guards to bring Peter and John into the room, and then they asked Peter and John, "Who gave you the right or the ability to do this?"

8 As the Holy Spirit gave him power, Peter said to them in response, "You fellow Israelites who rule us and all of you elders, listen to me! **9** Today you are questioning us about a good deed we did for a man who could not walk. You want to know how he became able to walk. **10** So we want this whole council and all the other Israelites to know what has happened. This man is able to stand before you because Jesus from Nazareth, the Messiah, healed him. You were responsible for the Romans executing Jesus by nailing him to a cross. But God brought Jesus back to life after they executed him.

11 Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth is the one of whom the Scriptures say,

> 'The stone that the builders threw away has become the most important stone in the building.'
>
> And you are those builders**, because you rejected Jesus**. **12** **So you should no longer reject him, because** only Jesus can save us. For God has given us no other person in the world who can save us **from the guilt of our sins**!"

13 The Jewish leaders recognized that Peter and John were not afraid of them. They also realized that these two men were ordinary people who had not studied in schools. So the leaders were amazed. They knew that these men had spent time with Jesus. **14** They also saw the man who had become able to walk again standing there with Peter and John. So they were not able to say anything to contradict them.

15 The Jewish leaders told guards to take Peter, John, and this man outside of the room where they were meeting. After they did so, the leaders talked with each other **about Peter and**

John. 16 They said, “There is nothing that we can do to punish these two men! The news of the amazing miracle that they have done has spread widely in Jerusalem. So we cannot tell people that it did not happen! 17 However, we must not allow any more people to hear what they have been teaching about this Jesus. So we must tell these men that we will punish them if they continue to tell other people about the one who they say gave them the power to heal this man.” 18 So the Jewish leaders told the guards to bring them into the room again. After the guards had done so, they told them both that they were completely forbidden to speak or teach about Jesus.

19 But Peter and John told them in response, “In order to obey your command, we would have to disobey God, who commanded us to tell everyone about Jesus. We will let you decide whether you think God would want us to obey you instead of him. 20 But as for us, we cannot obey you. We will not stop telling people about what we saw Jesus do and what we heard him teach.”

21 Then the Jewish leaders again told Peter and John not to disobey them. But then they let them go without punishing them. The leaders knew that throughout Jerusalem people were praising God for what had happened to the man who could not walk, and they did not want to upset the people. 22 The people were praising God because this was a remarkable miracle. The man whom Peter and John had healed by doing this miracle was over forty years old, and he had never before walked in his life.

23 After Peter and John left the council, they met with the others who believed in Jesus and told them everything that the people on the ruling council had said to them. 24 When the others who believed in Jesus heard this, they prayed together aloud to God, “O Lord! You made the sky, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. 25 Your Holy Spirit caused our ancestor, King David, who served you, to write these words:

‘Why did the people groups of the world become angry
and why did they plan uselessly against God?
26 The kings in the world prepared to fight,
and the rulers joined with them
to oppose the Lord God and the one whom he had chosen to be the Messiah.’

27 What David said is true! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with people who were Israelites and people who were not, joined together in this city of Jerusalem to oppose Jesus. They opposed him even though he had done nothing wrong and even though you, God, had sent him as the Messiah. 28 But when they opposed Jesus, they did no more than you allowed because it was what you had decided long ago would happen. 29 So now, Lord, listen to what they are saying about how they will punish us! Help us who serve you to speak about Jesus without being afraid at all! 30 Use your power to do great healings and many other miraculous deeds that will show the authority you have given to Jesus, your chosen Messiah!"

31 When the believers had finished praying, the place where they were meeting started to shake. The Holy Spirit gave them all power to tell people about Jesus as God had commanded, and they did that with great courage.

32 Those in the group of people who believed in Jesus were in complete agreement about what they believed and what they wanted. Not one of them said that he was the sole owner of anything. Instead, they shared what they had with one another. 33 The Representatives continued to preach powerfully that God had caused the Lord Jesus to live again after he died. And God was helping all the believers very much. 34 Here is one way God was helping them. No one among the believers was lacking anything. This was because other believers who owned fields or houses would sell some of their property to help them. They would bring the proceeds from the sale 35 and they would give it to the Representatives, who would then give out the money to the believers who needed it.

36 Now there was a man named Joseph who belonged to the tribe of Levi and who came from the island of Cyprus. The Representatives called him Barnabas. In the language of the Jews, that name means a person who always encourages others. 37 Barnabas sold a field that belonged to him, and he brought the money to the Representatives for them to give to other believers.

5 1 Now there was one of the believers whose name was Ananias. He was married, and his wife's name was Sapphira. They also sold some land. 2 He kept for himself some of the money he had received for the land. His wife knew that he had done that. Then he brought the rest of the money and gave it to the Representatives.

3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, you have allowed Satan to control you so completely that you
tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. You kept for yourself some of the money you received for
selling the land. You did not give us all of it. 4 Before you sold that land, you truly owned it.
And after you sold it, the money was still yours. So you should never have thought about doing
such a wicked thing. You were not just trying to deceive people! No, you were trying to
deceive God himself!” 5 When Ananias heard the things Peter told him, he immediately fell
down dead. And everyone who learned about Ananias’ death felt a great awe for God. 6 When
Ananias died, some young men came forward, wrapped his body in a sheet, and carried it out
and buried it.

7 About three hours later, his wife came in. But she did not know that Peter confronted her
husband about the lie they had told and that her husband had died as a result. 8 Then Peter
showed her the money that Ananias had brought and asked her, “Tell me, is this the amount of
money you two received for the land you sold?” She said, “Yes, that is what we received.”
9 So Peter said to her, “You both did a terrible thing when you agreed to try to deceive the
Holy Spirit! This is what will happen to you as a result. God struck your husband dead as a
punishment and some young men are just coming back from burying him. God is also going to
strike you dead, and they will take your body out and bury it as well.” 10 Immediately
Sapphira fell down dead right in front of Peter. Just then the young men came back in. When
they saw that she had also died, they carried her body out and buried it next to her husband’s
body.

11 All the believers in Jerusalem felt a great awe for God because of what had happened to
Ananias and Sapphira. Everyone else who heard about these things also felt great awe for God.

12 God was enabling the Representatives to do many amazing miracles that showed the
truth of what they were preaching among the people. All the believers were meeting together
regularly in the temple courtyard at the place called Solomon’s Porch. 13 All of the other
people who had not believed in Jesus were afraid to meet with the believers. However, those
people continued to speak very highly of them. 14 Many more men and women started
believing in the Lord Jesus, and they joined the group of believers. 15 Because the people were
seeing such amazing miracles, they started bringing those who had various diseases right into
the streets and placing them on stretchers and mattresses there. They were hoping that when

Peter walked by his shadow might touch some of them, because if even that happened, God would heal them. **16** Large crowds of people were also coming from the towns near Jerusalem. They were bringing those who had various diseases and those whom evil spirits were tormenting, and God healed all of them.

17 However, the high priest became very resentful **that such large crowds were coming to the Representatives**. Many priests who were members of the Sadducee group were also very resentful of them. They joined together with the high priest to work against them. **18** So they commanded the temple guards to arrest them and to put them in the public jail. **19** **The high priest and his allies kept them in jail overnight so that they could question them in the morning.** But that night an angel from the Lord God opened the jail doors and led all the Representatives outside. Then the angel told them, **20** "Go to the temple courtyard, stand there, and tell the people about the eternal life that Jesus can give them. Do not leave anything out, even though the Sanhedrin has commanded you not to say certain things." **21** So when the Representatives heard what the angel said, they went to the temple courtyard and began to teach the people once more about Jesus. By then it was about dawn. Around that same time, the high priest and the other priests who were working with him gathered together in the Jewish council chamber. From there they summoned the other council members. Together they were all the leaders of Israel. Once the whole council was present, they sent guards to the jail to get the Representatives. **22** But when the guards arrived at the jail, they discovered that they were not there. So they returned to the council and told the members, **23** "We saw that the jail doors were very safely locked and that the guards were keeping watch in front of the doors. But when we opened the doors **and went in to get those men**, none of them were inside the jail." **24** When the chief priests and the officer in charge of the temple guards heard that, they were greatly confused. They wondered what the consequences would be.

25 Then someone came and reported to them, "Listen to this! The men you put in jail have somehow gotten into the temple courtyard. And they are telling the people there about Jesus!" **26** So the officer in charge of the temple guards went to the temple courtyard with the officers. They brought the Representatives back **to the council room**. But they did not treat them roughly. They were afraid that if they did that, the people would try to kill them by throwing stones at them.

27 After the captain and his officers had brought the Representatives to the council room, they commanded them to stand in front of the council members. Then the high priest questioned them intensely. **28** He said to them, “We ordered you very clearly not to teach people about that man Jesus! But you have disobeyed us, and you have taught people all over Jerusalem about him! Furthermore, you are trying to make it seem that we are the ones who are guilty of that man’s death!” **29** But Peter, speaking for himself and the other Representatives, replied, “We have to obey what God commands us to do, not what you people tell us to do! **30** You are the ones who killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross! But God, whom our ancestors worshiped, caused Jesus to live again after he died. **31** God has honored Jesus more than he has honored anyone else. He has made him the one to save us and rule over us. He has enabled us Israelites to stop sinning and he has forgiven us for the sins we committed. **32** We tell people about these things that we saw happen to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to us who obey him, is also confirming that these things are true.” **33** When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they became so angry **with the Representatives** that they wanted to kill them.

34 But there was a council member named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Pharisee group. He taught the Jewish laws, and the Jewish people respected him highly. He stood up in the council and told the guards to take the Representatives out of the room for a short time. **35** **After the guards had taken them out,** Gamaliel said to the other council members, “You leaders of the people of Israel, you must think carefully about what you are going to do to these men. **36** Some years ago a man named Theudas led a revolt against the government. He claimed that he was a great man, and about 400 men joined him. But the Romans captured and executed him, and all those who had joined him went back to where they came from. So this revolt did not succeed. **37** After that, during the time when the Romans were recording the names of people in order to tax them, a man named Judas from the region of Galilee rebelled. He convinced some people to rebel with him. But he too died, and all those who had joined him went off in different directions. **38** Based on these examples, let me offer some advice. Do not kill these men! Set them free! I say this because if the things that are happening now are just something that humans have planned, someone will stop them. They will fail. **39** But if God has commanded them to do these things, you will not be able to stop them. You may even discover that you are working against God!” The other members of the council accepted what

Gamaliel said. **40** They told the temple guards to bring in the Representatives and beat them. **So the guards brought them into the council room and beat them.** Then the council members commanded them not to speak to people about Jesus any more, and they let them go.

41 So they left the council chamber. As they did, they even rejoiced that God had honored them by allowing people to treat them badly because they were testifying to Jesus. **42** Every day after that, they went to the temple area and to various people's houses, and they continued teaching people and telling them that Jesus is the Messiah.

6 **1** During that time, many more people were becoming believers. The Greek-speaking Jews began to complain about the Aramaic-speaking Jews because the widows among them were not receiving their fair share of food every day.

2 So **after** Jesus' 12 representatives **had heard what they were saying, they** summoned all the other believers **in Jerusalem** to meet together. Then they said to them, "We would not be doing the right thing if we stopped telling people the message God told us to share about Jesus in order to distribute food to people! **3** So, fellow believers, carefully choose seven men from among you, men whom you know the Spirit of God directs and who are very wise. Then we will instruct them to do this work. **4** As for us, we will keep on using our time to pray and to proclaim the news about Jesus."

5 All of the disciples liked their suggestion. So they chose Stephen, a man who strongly believed in God and whom the Holy Spirit controlled completely. They also chose Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, who was from the city of Antioch. Nicolas was a former Gentile who had converted to the Jewish religion. **6** The believers brought these seven men to the Representatives, who prayed for those men. As they prayed, they placed their hands on the men's heads to show that they approved of them to do that work.

7 More and more people were hearing the news about Jesus. The number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus was increasing greatly. Among them were very many Jewish priests. They put their trust in Jesus as the Messiah and so they began to live in the way he said they should.

8 God was giving Stephen power to do many amazing miracles among the people that showed that the message about Jesus was true. 9 However, some people opposed Stephen. They were Jews who attended a synagogue that had the name Freedmen's Synagogue. Some other Jews also opposed Stephen. They were from the synagogues that people attended who were from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They all began to argue with Stephen. 10 But they were not able to prove that what he said was wrong, because God's Spirit enabled him to speak very wisely.

11 So they secretly persuaded some men to accuse Stephen falsely. Those men said, "We heard him say bad things about Moses and God." 12 They also made the other Jewish people angry at Stephen, including the elders and the teachers of the Jewish laws. They came up to Stephen, grabbed him, and took him to the Jewish council. 13 They also brought in some people who told lies about Stephen. They said, "This man keeps saying bad things about this holy temple and about the laws that Moses received from God. 14 What we mean is that we have heard him say that this Jesus from the town of Nazareth will destroy the temple here in Jerusalem and will tell us to obey different customs from the ones that Moses taught our ancestors."

15 All the people in the council room stared at Stephen and saw that his face resembled the face of an angel.

7 1 Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are the things that these people are saying about you true?" 2 Stephen replied, "Fellow Jews and respected leaders, please listen to me! The glorious God whom we worship appeared to our forefather Abraham while he was still living in the region of Mesopotamia, before he moved to the city of Haran. 3 God said to him, 'Leave this land where you and your relatives are living and go into the land to which I will direct you.' 4 So Abraham left that land, which was also called Chaldea, and he arrived in Haran and lived there. After his father died, God told him to move to this land where our people are now living.

5 At that time God did not give Abraham any land to own here, not even a small plot of this land. But God promised that later he would give this land to him and his descendants, and

that it would always belong to them. However, at that time Abraham did not have any children who would inherit it.

6 Later God told Abraham, 'Your descendants will go and live in a foreign country. They will live there for four hundred years. During that time, the rulers will mistreat your descendants and force them to work as slaves. **7** But I will punish the people who make them work as slaves,' said God. 'After that, your descendants will leave that land, and they will come and worship me in this land.'

8 Then God commanded that every male in Abraham's household and all of his male descendants should be circumcised to show that they all belonged to God. Later Abraham's son, Isaac, was born, and when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob was the father of the 12 men whom we Jews call the patriarchs, our forefathers.

9 You know that Jacob's older sons became jealous because their father favored their younger brother Joseph. So they sold him to merchants who took him to Egypt, where he became a slave. But God took care of Joseph. **10** God protected him whenever people caused him to suffer. He enabled Joseph to be wise, and he caused Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to think well of Joseph. So Pharaoh appointed him to rule over Egypt and to look after all of Pharaoh's property.

11 **While Joseph was doing that work,** there was a time when there was very little food anywhere in Egypt and also in Canaan. People were suffering badly. At that time Jacob and his sons in Canaan could not find enough food to eat. **12** When Jacob heard a report that there was grain in Egypt that people could buy, he sent Joseph's older brothers there to buy grain. **They went and bought grain from Joseph, but they did not recognize him. Then they returned home.**
13 When Joseph's brothers went to Egypt again, they bought grain from Joseph once more. But this time he told them who he was. And so Pharaoh found out that these men who had come from Canaan were Joseph's brothers. **14** Joseph sent his brothers back home to tell their father Jacob that Joseph wanted him and his entire family to come to Egypt. At that time Jacob's family consisted of 75 people. **15** So when Jacob heard that, he and all his family went to live in Egypt. **Later on,** Jacob died there, and our other ancestors, his sons, also died there.

16 Their descendants brought their bodies back to our land and buried them in the tomb that Abraham bought from Hamor's sons in the city of Shechem.

17 Our ancestors had become very numerous by the time God was about to rescue them from Egypt. That is what God had promised Abraham he would do. **18** Another king had begun to rule in Egypt. He did not know that Joseph had greatly helped the people of Egypt **long before his own time**. **19** That king tried to get rid of our ancestors in cruel ways. He oppressed them and caused them to suffer greatly. He even commanded them to abandon their newborn babies outside their homes so that the babies would die.

20 During that time Moses was born, and God saw that he was a very beautiful child. His parents secretly cared for him in their house for three months. **21** Then they had to abandon him outside the house. But Pharaoh's daughter found him and cared for him as her own son. **22** The Egyptians taught Moses the many things that they had learned. When he grew up, he spoke and did things powerfully.

23 One day when Moses was about forty years old, he decided to see how his relatives, the people of Israel, were doing. **24** He saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the Israelites. So he went over to help the Israelite man. He avenged him by killing the Egyptian. **25** Moses expected that his fellow Israelites would understand that God had sent him to free them from being slaves. But they did not understand. **26** The next day, Moses saw two of his fellow Israelites fighting each other. He tried to make them stop by saying to them, 'Now you two are both Israelites! You must stop hurting each other!' **27** But the man who was injuring the other man pushed Moses away. He said to him, 'You have no authority over us! **28** You probably want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday!' **29** When Moses heard that, he fled from Egypt to the land of Midian. He lived there for some years. **He got married, and** he **and his wife** had two sons.

30 One day forty years later, the Lord God came to Moses in the form of an angel. This was in the desert near Mount Sinai. He appeared in the flames of a bush that was on fire. **31** When Moses saw it, he was amazed because the bush was not burning up. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord God say to him, **32** 'I am the God whom your ancestors worshiped. I am the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worship.' Moses was so

afraid that he began to shake. He was afraid to look at the bush any longer. **33** Then the Lord God said to him, 'Take your sandals off to show that you honor me. Because I am here, the place where you are standing is especially mine. **34** I have seen clearly how the people of Egypt are continually causing my people to suffer. I have heard my people when they groan because of it. So I am taking action to rescue them from Egypt. Now get ready, because I am going to send you back to Egypt.'

35 This Moses is the one who had tried to help our Israelite people. But they rejected him by saying, 'You have no authority over us!' Moses is the one whom God himself sent to rule them and to free them from being slaves. He did that with the help of the angel who spoke to him from the bush. **36** Moses is the one who led our ancestors out from Egypt. He did many kinds of miracles in Egypt, at the Sea of Reeds, and during the forty years that the Israelite people lived in the wilderness. **37** This Moses is the one who said to the Israelite people, 'God will cause another man from among your own people to be a prophet like me for you.' **38** It was this man Moses who was among the Israelites who were together in the wilderness. God spoke through the angel on Mount Sinai to give Moses our laws. Moses was the one who told our ancestors what the angel had said. He was the one to whom God gave commandments and who passed them on to us. Those commandments are still powerful today.

39 However, our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him as their leader and wanted to return to Egypt. **40** So they told his older brother Aaron, 'Make idols for us who will be our gods to lead us. As for that fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!' **41** When the Israelites rejected Moses, they made an image that looked like a calf. Then they offered sacrifices to honor that idol. They sang and danced to worship something that they themselves had made. **42** So God stopped correcting them. He left them to worship the stars in the sky. This agrees with what one of the prophets wrote:

> God said, 'You Israelite people repeatedly killed animals and offered them to me with grain as sacrifices during those forty years that you were in the wilderness. But you certainly were not truly offering them to me!
>
> **43** On the contrary, you carried with you the tent that contained the idol representing the god Molech that you worshiped. You also carried with you the image of the star called Rephan. Those were idols that you had made, and you

worshiped them instead of me. So I will cause you to be taken away far from
your homes to regions even farther than the country of Babylon.'

44 While our ancestors were in the desert, they worshiped God at the sacred tent that showed that he was there with them. They had made the tent exactly like God had commanded Moses to make it. It was exactly like the model that Moses had seen when he was up on the mountain. **45** Later on, other ancestors of ours carried that tent with them when Joshua led them into this land. That was during the time when they took this land for themselves, when God forced the people who previously lived here to leave. So the Israelites were able to possess this land. The tent remained in this land and was still here when King David ruled. **46** David pleased God, and he asked God to let him build a temple where he and all of our Israelite people could worship God. **47** But instead, God told David's son Solomon to build a temple where people could worship him.

48 However, we know that God, who is greater than everything, does not live in temples that people build. It is as the prophet Isaiah wrote:

49-50 God said, 'I created everything in heaven and on earth. My presence fills all of
creation. So you human beings cannot make a place good enough for me to live
in!'

51 You people are disobedient to God, as if you did not even know God! You are exactly like your ancestors! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as they did! **52** Your ancestors caused every prophet to suffer. They even killed those who long ago announced that the Messiah would come, the one who always did what pleased God. And the Messiah has come! He is the one whom you recently turned over to his enemies and insisted that they kill him! **53** You are the people who have received God's laws. Those were laws that God caused angels to give to our ancestors. However, you have not obeyed them!"

54 When the Jewish council members and others there heard all that Stephen said, they became very angry. They were grinding their teeth together because they were so angry at him!

55 But the Holy Spirit completely controlled Stephen. He looked up into heaven and saw a dazzling light from God, and he saw Jesus standing at God's right side. **56** "Look," he said, "I see right into heaven, and I see the Son of Man **in human form** standing where God rules!"

57 When the Jewish council members and others heard that, they shouted loudly. They put
their hands over their ears so that they would not hear him. All together they ran up to Stephen
and grabbed him. 58 They dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and started to throw
stones at him to kill him. The people who were accusing him took off their outer garments in
order to throw stones more easily. They put these garments on the ground next to a young man
whose name was Saul so that he could guard them. 59 While they continued to throw stones at
Stephen, Stephen prayed out loud, "Lord Jesus, welcome me when I die!"

60 Then Stephen knelt down and cried out loud, "Lord, do not punish them for this sin!"
After he had said this, he died.

8 1-2 Then some men who honored God buried Stephen's body in a tomb, and they
mourned loudly for him.

But Saul thought the Sanhedrin had done the right thing by stoning Stephen. On that same
day, people Saul was leading started severely persecuting the believers who were living in
Jerusalem. So most of the believers fled to other places throughout the provinces of Judea and
Samaria. But the apostles remained in Jerusalem. 3 Saul began trying to destroy the group of
believers. He entered their houses one by one. He dragged away men and women who believed
in Jesus, and he put them in prison.

4 The believers who had left Jerusalem went to different places, where they continued
preaching the message about Jesus. 5 One of those believers, whose name was Philip, went
from Jerusalem to a city in the district of Samaria. There he was telling the people that Jesus is
the Messiah. 6 Many people there heard Philip speak and saw the miraculous things that he
was doing. So they all paid close attention to what he was saying. 7 For example, Philip
commanded evil spirits to come out of many people, and they came out screaming. Also, many
people who could not move their muscles and many others who were lame were healed. 8 So
many people in that city were very happy.

9 There was a man in that city whose name was Simon. He had been practicing sorcery for
a long time, and he amazed the people in the district of Samaria with his magic. He claimed he
was "Simon the Great One!" 10 The people there, both ordinary and important people, listened

to him. They were saying, “Simon is the Great Power of God.” **11** They continued to listen to him carefully because for a long time he had astonished them by practicing sorcery. **12** But then they believed Philip’s message of the good news about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere and about Jesus the Messiah. Philip baptized the men and the women who believed in Jesus. **13** Though the people had been worshiping him, Simon too believed Philip’s message and received baptism. He began to accompany Philip constantly. He was continually amazed by the great miracles he saw Philip doing. These things showed that Philip was speaking the truth.

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people throughout Samaria district had believed God’s message, they sent Peter and John there. **15** When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed for those new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. **16** For the Holy Spirit had not yet openly empowered any of them. They had only received baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. **17** Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 Simon saw that people received the Holy Spirit as a result of the apostles placing their hands on them. So he offered to give money to the apostles. **19** He said, “Enable me also to do what you are doing, so that if I place my hands on someone, he will receive the Holy Spirit.” **20** But Peter said to him, “May you and your money be destroyed, because you tried to get God’s gift with money! **21** You cannot work with us in what we are doing, because you do not have the right attitude toward God! **22** So stop thinking wickedly like that! Plead with the Lord to forgive you for what you wanted to do, since he will forgive you if you ask sincerely. **23** You are in spiritual danger! I perceive that you are extremely jealous of us and that a continual desire to do evil is controlling you.” **24** Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord that he will not do to me what you just said!”

25 Peter and John then told the people there what they knew personally about the Lord Jesus. They shared the message of the Lord with them. Then they both returned to Jerusalem. Along the way, they declared the good news about Jesus to people living in many towns in the district of Samaria.

26 While Peter and John were returning to Jerusalem, the Lord sent an angel to Philip.
Even though so many Samaritans were becoming believers in Jesus, that angel told him, "Get
ready and go south along the road that goes from Jerusalem to the city of Gaza." That road is
in a desert area. **27** So Philip got ready and went along that road. On the road he met a man
from the land of Ethiopia. The man was an important official of the queen of Ethiopia. In his
language people called their queen the Kandake. He took care of all of her funds. This man had
gone to Jerusalem to worship God, **28** and he was returning home and was seated, riding in his
carriage. As he was riding, he was reading aloud from what the prophet Isaiah had written.

29 God's Spirit told Philip, "Go near to that carriage and keep walking close to it!" **30** So
Philip ran over to the carriage. He heard the official reading what the prophet Isaiah had
written. He asked the man, "Do you understand what you are reading?" **31** He answered
Philip, "No, I cannot possibly understand it if there is no one to explain it to me." Then the
man said to Philip, "Please come up and sit beside me." **So Philip got into the carriage.** **32** The
part of the Scriptures that the official was reading was this: "People will lead him away to kill
him as they lead a sheep to the place where they are going to kill it. He will be silent, as a lamb
stands silently while someone cuts off its wool.

> **33** People will humiliate him and condemn him unjustly. He will have no
> descendants because people will kill him before he can have children."

34 The official asked Philip about what he was reading, "Tell me, who was the prophet
writing about? Was he writing about himself, or about someone else?" **35** So Philip replied to
him. He began with that Scripture passage, and he told him the good news about Jesus.

36 While they were traveling along the road, they came to a place where there was some
water. Then the official said to Philip, "Look, there is some water! I would like you to baptize
me." **37** [12] [Philip said, "If you believe in Jesus with complete sincerity, God will save you,
and you may be baptized." The Ethiopian answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of
God."] **38** So the official told the driver to stop the carriage. Then both Philip and the official
went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. **39** When they came up out of the water,
suddenly the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official never saw Philip again. Even so,
the official continued going very happily along the road.

40 Philip then realized that the Spirit had miraculously taken him to the town of Azotus.
While he traveled around in that region, he continued proclaiming the good news about Jesus
in all the towns between the cities of Azotus and Caesarea. He was still proclaiming it when he
finally arrived in Caesarea.

9 1 Meanwhile, Saul continued angrily threatening to kill those who believed in the Lord
Jesus. He went to the high priest in Jerusalem 2 and requested him to write letters introducing
Saul to the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in the city of Damascus. The letters would ask
them to give Saul the authority to seize any man or woman who followed the teachings of
Jesus and take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. **There the Jewish leaders could judge and punish
them. The high priest gave Saul the letters he asked for.**

3 While Saul and those with him were traveling, they were approaching Damascus.
Suddenly a brilliant light from heaven shone around Saul. 4 Immediately he fell onto the
ground. Then he heard the voice of someone say to him, "Saul, Saul, stop trying to hurt me!"
5 Saul asked him, "Lord, who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are hurting.
6 Now stand up and go into the city of Damascus! Someone there will tell you what I want
you to do." 7 The men who were traveling with Saul were so astonished that they could not
say anything. They just stood there. This was because they heard someone speaking, but they
did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could not
see anything. So the men with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. 9 For the
next three days Saul could not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything.

10 In Damascus there was a man who believed in Jesus named Ananias. Jesus made him
see a vision and in it he called to him, "Ananias!" Ananias replied, "Lord, I am listening."
11 Jesus told him, "Go to Straight Street, to the house that belongs to Judas. Ask someone
there if you can talk to a man named Saul who is from the city of Tarsus. Saul is praying to me
at this moment. 12 Saul has seen a vision in which a man named Ananias entered the house
where he was staying and put his hands on him to restore his sight." 13 Ananias answered,
"But Lord, many people have told me about this man! He has done many bad things to the
people in Jerusalem who believe in you! 14 The chief priests have given him permission to
come here to Damascus and take prisoner all those who believe in you!" 15 But Jesus told

Ananias, “Go visit Saul! Do what I say, because I have chosen him to serve me. I want him to speak about me to non-Jewish people and their leaders and to the Israelite people. **16** I myself will tell him that he must often suffer in order to tell people about me.” **17** So Ananias went, and after he found the house where Saul was, he entered it. Then, as soon as he met Saul, he put his hands on him, and he said, “Saul, you are already like a brother to me. Jesus himself commanded me to come to you. Jesus is the one who appeared to you while you were traveling along the road to Damascus. He sent me to you to restore your sight, and he wants the Holy Spirit to lead and empower you.” **18** Instantly, what seemed like flakes fell from Saul’s eyes, and he was able to see again. Then he got up and was baptized. **19** After Saul ate some food, he became strong again. Saul stayed with the other believers in Damascus for several days.

20 Right away he began to preach about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues. He told the people there that Jesus is the Son of God. **21** The people who heard him preach were amazed. Some of them were saying, “We can hardly believe that this is the same man who persecuted the believers in Jerusalem! And he came here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests in Jerusalem!” **22** But God enabled Saul to preach to many people even more convincingly. He was proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jewish leaders in Damascus became angry **because they could not disprove what he said**.

23 Some time later, the Jewish leaders there plotted to kill him. **24** Those Jewish leaders were continually watching the people passing through the city gates so that if they saw Saul there, they could kill him. However, someone told Saul what they planned to do. **25** So some of those whom he had led to believe in Jesus took him one night to the high stone wall that surrounded the city. They used ropes to lower him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. In this way he escaped from Damascus.

26 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the other believers there. However, almost all of them continued to be afraid of him. They were not convinced that he had become a believer. **27** But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He explained to the apostles how, while Saul was traveling along the road to Damascus, he had seen Jesus, who had spoken to him there. He also told them how Saul had preached boldly about Jesus to people in Damascus. **28** So Saul began to meet with the apostles and other believers throughout Jerusalem. He spoke boldly to the people there about Jesus.

29 Saul was also speaking about Jesus with Jews who spoke Greek, and he was debating with them. They could not answer his arguments, so they were continually trying to think of a way to kill him. **30** But the other believers found out that the Jews who spoke Greek were planning to kill Saul. So some of them took him to the city of Caesarea. There they put him on a ship that was going to Tarsus, his hometown.

31 Since no one was persecuting them anymore, the believers throughout the entire regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were able to live peacefully. The Holy Spirit was strengthening them and encouraging them. They were honoring the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was leading many other people to become believers.

32 Those peaceful conditions allowed Peter to travel throughout those regions. Once he went to the coastal plain to visit the believers who lived in the town of Lydda. **33** There he met a man whose name was Aeneas. Aeneas was not able to walk or stand, and so he had not been able to get up from his bed for eight years. **34** Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Messiah heals you! Get up and roll up your own mat!" Right away Aeneas stood up. **35** Most of the people who lived in Lydda and on the Plain of Sharon saw Aeneas after the Lord had healed him, so they believed in the Lord Jesus.

36 In the town of Joppa there was a believer whose name was Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good deeds for poor people by giving them things that they needed. **37** During the time that Peter was in Lydda, she became sick and died. Some women there washed her body according to the Jewish custom. Then they covered her body with cloth and placed it in an upstairs room in her house.

38 Lydda was near the city of Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was still in Lydda, they sent two men to go to Peter. When they arrived where Peter was, they urged him, "Please come immediately with us to Joppa!" **39** Peter got ready right away and went with them. When he arrived at the house in Joppa, they took him to the upstairs room where the body of Dorcas was lying. All the widows there stood around him. They were crying and showing him the tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made for people while she was still alive. **40** But Peter sent them all out of the room so that he could pray. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Then, turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, stand up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. **41** He grasped one of her hands and

helped her to stand up. After he had summoned the believers and especially the widows among them to come back in, he showed them that she was alive again. **42** Soon people everywhere in Joppa knew about that miracle and, as a result, many people believed in Jesus. **43** Peter stayed in Joppa many days with a man named Simon, who made leather from animal skins.

10 **1** There was a man whose name was Cornelius who lived in the city of Caesarea. He was an officer who commanded 100 men in a large group of Roman soldiers from Italy. **2** He continually tried to do what would please God. He and his entire household were non-Jews who worshiped God. He often gave money to help poor Jewish people. He prayed to God regularly.

3 One day at about three o'clock in the afternoon, Cornelius saw a vision. He clearly saw an angel whom God had sent. He saw the angel coming into his room and saying to him, "Cornelius!" **4** Cornelius stared at the angel and became terrified. Then he asked fearfully, "Sir, what do you want?" The angel answered him, "You have been praying regularly to God. You often give money to help poor people. Those things have been like an offering to God, and he has noticed them. **5** So now command some men to go to Joppa. Tell them to bring back a man named Simon whose other name is Peter. **6** He is staying with a man, also named Simon, who makes leather. His house is near the ocean." **7** When the angel who was speaking with Cornelius had gone, he summoned two of his household servants and a soldier who served him, one who also worshiped God. **8** He explained to them everything that the angel had said. Then he told them to go to the city of Joppa and ask Peter to come to Caesarea.

9 About noon the next day, those three men were traveling along the road. As they were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the flat housetop to pray. **10** Peter became hungry and wanted something to eat. While some people were preparing the food, he saw a vision. **11** He saw an opening in the sky through which something like a large, square piece of cloth was coming down. Someone seemed to be lowering it by its four corners to the ground. **12** Inside the sheet were many different kinds of creatures. Some had four feet, others crawled on the ground, and others were wild birds. These included animals and birds that the Mosaic laws forbade Jews to eat. **13** Then he heard God say to him, "Go ahead, Peter, kill some of these and eat them." **14** But Peter replied, "Lord, surely not! I have never eaten anything that our Jewish

law says is unacceptable to you or that we must not eat!” **15** Then Peter heard God talk to him a second time. He said, “I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say that it is not acceptable to eat!” **16** This happened three times. Right after that, the sheet with the animals and birds went back up into the sky.

17 This left Peter trying to understand what that vision meant. Meanwhile, the men Cornelius had sent arrived in Joppa. They asked people how to get to Simon’s house. When people told them, they found the house and stood outside the gate. **18** They called from the gate and asked if a man whose name was Simon, whose other name was Peter, was staying there. **19** While Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Listen! Three men are here who want you to go with them. **20** So do not be reluctant. Go downstairs and go with them! Do not think that you should not go with them, because I have sent them here!” **21** So Peter went down to the men and said to them, “Greetings! I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?” **22** They replied, “Cornelius, who is a Roman army officer, sent us here. He is a good man who worships God. All of the Jewish people who know about him speak well of him. An angel from God told Cornelius, ‘Have some men to go to Joppa and get Simon Peter. Bring him to your house and listen to what he has to say.’” **23** So Peter invited them into the house and told them that they should stay there that night.

The next day Peter got ready and went with the men. Several of the believers from Joppa also went with him. **24** The day after that, they arrived in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had also invited his relatives and close friends to come, so they were there in his house too. **25** When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and bowed low in front of him to worship him. **26** But Peter grasped Cornelius by the hand and lifted him to his feet. He said, “Stand up! Do not bow down and worship me! I myself am only human, like you!”

27 While he was talking to Cornelius, Peter **and the others** entered the house. They saw that Cornelius had invited many people to come **and hear Peter**. **28** Then Peter said to them, “You all know that we Jews think we are disobeying our laws if we associate with people who are not Jews or visit them in their homes. However, God has shown me **in a vision** that I should not say that God only accepts people who are Jews. **29** So when you sent some men to ask me to

come here, I came right away without objection. So, please tell me, why have you asked me to come here?"

30 Cornelius replied, "About this time three days ago, I was praying to God in my house, as I regularly do at three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man whose clothes shone brightly stood in front of me **31** and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer. He has also noticed that you have often given money to help poor people, and he is pleased with that. **32** So now, send messengers to go to the city of Joppa in order to ask Simon, whose other name is Peter, to come here. He is staying near the ocean in a house that belongs to another man named Simon, who makes leather.' **33** So I sent some men right away to ask you to come here. I certainly thank you for coming. Now we all are gathered here, knowing that God is with us. We want to hear all the things that the Lord God has commanded you to say. So please speak to us."

34 So Peter began to speak to them. He said, "Now I understand that it is true that God does not favor only certain groups of people. **35** Instead, from every people group he accepts everyone who honors him and who does what pleases him. **36** You know what God told us Israelites. He proclaimed to us the good news that people could live peacefully with him because of what Jesus the Messiah has done. This Jesus is not Lord only over us Israelites. He is also the Lord who rules over all people. **37** You know what Jesus did throughout the land of Judea, beginning in Galilee. He started to do those things after John proclaimed to people that they should stop their sinful behavior. If they did, John baptized them. **38** You know that God gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, and gave him the power to do miracles. You also know how Jesus went to many places, doing good deeds. Whenever he met people whom the devil was causing to suffer, he healed them. It was God who enabled Jesus to do those things."

39 "We all saw the things Jesus did in Jerusalem and around every part of the land of Israel where he lived. His enemies killed him by nailing him to a wooden cross. **40** Jesus died on a Friday, but God brought him back to life that Sunday. God made sure that many people would see that he was certainly alive again. **41** At that time God did not let everyone see him. God had previously chosen some people to be witnesses that Jesus was alive. I am one of the people who saw him and even ate meals together with him just after God brought him back to life.

42 Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and tell them that God has chosen him to judge
everyone one day. He will judge those who are still alive and those who have died before that
day. 43 All the prophets who wrote about him long ago told the people about him. They wrote
that if anyone believed in him, God would forgive whatever sins they had done, because of
what this man, Jesus, would do for them."

44 While Peter was still speaking about Jesus, suddenly the Holy Spirit came to all those
people from other nations who were listening to the message. 45 The Jewish believers who had
come with Peter from Joppa were amazed that God had so kindly given the Holy Spirit to
people from all different nations too. 46 The Jewish believers knew that God had done that
because they were hearing those people speak in other languages to tell how great God is. Then
Peter said, 47 to the other Jewish believers who were there, "God has given them the Holy Spirit
just as he gave him to us Jewish believers. Surely all of you would agree that we should
baptize these people!" 48 Then Peter told Cornelius and his guests that they should receive
baptism as believers in Jesus the Messiah. Peter and the believers who had come with him from
Joppa baptized all of them. After they had received baptism, Cornelius invited Peter to stay with
them for several days. So he and the other Jewish believers did that.

11 1 The apostles and other believers who lived in various towns in the province of Judea
heard that some non-Jewish people had also believed the message of God about Jesus. 2 But
there were some Jewish believers in Jerusalem who followed the teaching of the Pharisees and
believed that Jews should not associate with non-Jews. When Peter came back from Caesarea
to Jerusalem, they met with him and criticized him. 3 They said to him, "Not only was it
wrong for you to go into the home of someone who was not Jewish, you even ate there!"

4 So Peter told them exactly what had happened. 5 He said, "I was praying by myself in the
city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet coming down
from heaven, suspended by its four corners. It came down to where I was. 6 As I was gazing at
it, I looked closely and I saw some tame animals and also some wild animals, reptiles, and wild
birds. 7 Then I heard a voice commanding me, 'Go ahead, Peter, kill some and eat them!'
8 But I replied, 'Lord, surely not! I have never eaten anything that our laws say we must not
eat!' 9 The voice spoke to me from heaven a second time: 'I am God, so if I have made

something acceptable to eat, do not say it is unacceptable.' [10] This same thing happened two more times. Then the sheet with all those animals and birds went back up into heaven.

[11] At that exact moment, three men arrived at the house where I was staying. Their master had sent them to bring me to Caesarea. [12] God's Spirit told me that I should not hesitate to go with them even though they were not Jews. Six Jewish believers went with me to Caesarea. We went into the house of the man who had sent for me. [13] He told us that he had seen an angel standing in his house. The angel told him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa and bring back Simon whose other name is Peter. [14] He will tell you how God will save you and everyone else in your house.' [15] While I was speaking to them, the Holy Spirit suddenly came to them just as he came to us during the Pentecost festival. [16] Then I remembered what Jesus had said: 'John baptized you with water, but God will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' [17] God gave us the Holy Spirit when we believed in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. God gave those non-Jews the same Holy Spirit. So I had to cooperate with what God was doing **and baptize them**."

[18] After those Jewish believers heard what Peter said, they stopped criticizing him. Instead, they praised God. They said, "It is clear that God has accepted non-Jews so they too can have everlasting life if they turn from their sinful behavior."

[19] After Stephen died, people started persecuting the other believers in Jerusalem. So many of them left and went to other places. Some of them went to the land of Phoenicia. Some went to the island of Cyprus. Others went to the city of Antioch in Syria. In those places. They told people the good news about Jesus. But most of them told only other Jewish people. [20] But some of the believers were men from the island of Cyprus and from the city of Cyrene in north Africa. They went to Antioch and also spoke with non-Jewish people, telling them that Jesus is the Messiah. [21] The Lord God was powerfully enabling those believers to preach effectively. As a result, very many non-Jewish people believed their message and trusted in Jesus.

[22] The group of believers in Jerusalem learned that many people in Antioch were believing in Jesus. So they sent Barnabas to Antioch **to teach and encourage the new believers**. [23] When Barnabas got to Antioch, he recognized that God had acted kindly toward the people there. This made him very happy. He encouraged all of the new believers to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus completely. [24] Barnabas was a good man whom the Holy Spirit completely

controlled. He trusted God completely. Because of what Barnabas did, many more people in Antioch believed in Jesus.

25 Then Barnabas left Antioch and went to the city of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia to look for Saul. **26** After Barnabas found Saul, he brought him back to Antioch to help teach the believers there. Barnabas and Saul met regularly with the church there for a whole year. They taught large numbers of people about Jesus. The people of Antioch were the first people who called the disciples of Jesus "Christians."

27 During the time that Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch, some believers who were prophets came there from Jerusalem. **28** One of them whose name was Agabus stood up **in order to speak**. God's Spirit enabled him to prophesy that there would soon be a severe shortage of food in many countries. (This shortage happened when Claudius was the Roman emperor.) **29** **When the believers there heard what Agabus said,** they decided that they would send money to help the believers who lived in Judea. Each of them decided to give as much money as he was able to give. **30** They sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem.

12 **1** About this same time, King Herod Agrippa sent soldiers to arrest some of the leaders of the group of believers in Jerusalem. The soldiers put them in prison. The king did that because he wanted to hurt the believers and their community. **2** He commanded a soldier to cut off the head of the apostle James, the older brother of the apostle John. So the soldier did that. **3** When Herod realized that he had pleased the leaders of the Jewish people, he commanded soldiers to arrest Peter too. This happened during the festival when the Jewish people ate bread without yeast. **4** After the soldiers arrested Peter, they put him in prison. Herod assigned four groups of soldiers to guard Peter. Each group had four soldiers. Herod wanted to bring Peter out of prison and judge him in front of the Jewish people after the Passover Festival was finished. **He then planned to execute Peter.**

5 So for several days Peter stayed in prison. But the other believers in their group in Jerusalem were urgently praying to God, asking him to help Peter. **6** It was the night before Herod planned to bring Peter out of prison and have him executed publicly. Peter was sleeping in the prison between two soldiers. A soldier on one side of him had locked a chain onto

Peter's wrist and his own wrist. A soldier on the other side of Peter had done the same thing. Two more soldiers were guarding the prison doors. **7** Suddenly, an angel from the Lord God stood beside Peter. A bright light shone in his cell. **But Peter was still sleeping so soundly that** the angel poked him in the side to wake him up. The angel told him, "Get up quickly!" **While Peter was getting up,** the chains fell off from his wrists. **However, the soldiers were not aware of what was happening.** **8** Then the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt around you and tie your sandals onto your feet!" And Peter did what the angel told him to do. Then the angel told him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me!" **9** So Peter **put on his cloak and sandals and** followed the angel out of the prison cell. He had no idea that all this was really happening. He thought that he was dreaming. **10** Peter and the angel walked by the soldiers who were guarding the two doors, but the soldiers did not see them. Then they came to the iron gate that led into the city. The gate swung open for them, and Peter and the angel walked out of the prison. After they had walked some distance along one street, the angel suddenly disappeared. **11** Then Peter finally realized that this was not a vision, it was really happening. So he thought, "Now I know that the Lord God truly sent an angel to help me. He rescued me from what Herod planned to do to me and from all the things that the Jewish leaders expected would happen."

12 When Peter realized that God had rescued him, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John, whose other name was Mark. Many believers had assembled there, and they were praying that God would help Peter somehow. **13** When Peter knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl whose name was Rhoda came to find out who was outside the door. **14** **When Peter responded,** she recognized his voice, but she was so happy and excited that she forgot to open the door! Instead, she ran back into the house. She told the other believers that Peter was standing outside the door. **15** But they said to her, "You must be crazy!" But she continued to say that it was really true. They kept responding, "**No, it cannot be Peter.** It is probably his angel." **16** But Peter kept knocking the whole time those inside were talking. So when some of them finally opened the door, they saw that it was Peter, and they could hardly believe it! **17** Peter waved his hand to get them to be quiet. Then he told them exactly how the Lord God had let him out of the prison. He also said, "Tell James, the leader of our group, and our other fellow believers what has happened." Then Peter left and went away somewhere else.

18 The next morning the soldiers who had been guarding Peter **saw that he was gone**. They wondered what had happened to him, and they became terribly upset. **19** **Then Herod heard**

about it. So he commanded soldiers to search for Peter, but they did not find him. Then Herod questioned the soldiers who had been guarding Peter. But the soldiers had no good explanation for what had happened. So Herod commanded them to be executed, which was how the Romans punished guards whose prisoners escaped. Afterwards, Herod went from the province of Judea to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed for some time.

20 King Herod became very upset with the people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. He stopped them from trading with the people he ruled. But the people of Tyre and Sidon needed to buy food from those regions. So they sent representatives together to the city of Caesarea to meet with Herod. They persuaded Blastus, who was one of Herod's important officials, to tell Herod that they wanted to live peacefully with him. **21** On the day that Herod had planned to meet with the representatives of Tyre and Sidon, he did some things to impress them. He put on very expensive clothes and he sat on his royal throne. Then he formally addressed all the people who had gathered there. **22** Those who were listening to him shouted repeatedly, "King Herod speaks so well that he must be a god, not a man!" **23** Herod accepted the praise of the people instead of telling them they should praise God. So while the people were still praising Herod, the Lord God sent an angel to punish him. That angel punished him severely: Worms ate him and he died.

24 The believers continued telling God's message to people in many places, and the number of people who believed in Jesus was continually increasing.

25 Barnabas and Saul finished delivering the money to help the Jewish believers in the province of Judea. They returned to the city of Jerusalem. They brought John, whose other name was Mark, with them.

13 **1** At that time in the group of believers in the city of Antioch there were prophets and teachers. They were: Barnabas; Simeon, whose other name was Niger; Lucius, who was from the city of Cyrene; Manaen, who had grown up with Herod Antipas when he was the ruler of Galilee; and Saul. **2** While the believers in Antioch were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them. He said, "I want you to let Barnabas and Saul serve me in a particular way. I want you to send them on a special mission that I have chosen them to do." **3** So the believers fasted and prayed some more. Then they put their hands on Barnabas and

Saul **to show that they approved of them going on this special mission**. Then they sent them off to do what the Holy Spirit had commanded.

4 The Holy Spirit gave Barnabas and Saul instructions about where to go. So they went from Antioch to the city of Seleucia, which is by the sea. From there they went by ship to the city of Salamis on the island of Cyprus. **5** While they were in Salamis, they went to the Jewish meeting places. There they proclaimed the message God had told them to share about Jesus. John Mark went with them and was helping them.

6 The three of them crossed from one side of the island to the other **and shared the gospel message in each town they passed through**. Eventually they came to the city of Paphos. There they met a sorcerer whose name was Bar Jesus. He was a Jew who falsely claimed to be a prophet. **7** He was often in the company of the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was a sensible man. The governor sent someone to ask Barnabas and Saul to come to him because he wanted to hear what God had told them to say. **8** However, Bar Jesus, who also called himself Elymas, contradicted what Barnabas and Paul were saying. (The name Elymas means "the Sorcerer.") He kept trying to persuade the governor not to believe in Jesus. **9** Saul was using his Roman name, Paul, because he was visiting a Roman official. The Holy Spirit gave Paul boldness and insight. He looked steadily at the sorcerer. **10** Paul said, "You are constantly lying to people and doing things to deceive them! You are serving the devil! You try to stop everything that is good! You must stop trying to keep people from living in the way that God wants! **11** Right now the Lord God is going to punish you! You will become blind and you will not even be able to see the sun until God decides to let you see again." At once Elymas could no longer see clearly. Then he could not see at all. He wandered around, searching for someone to take him by the hand and lead him. **12** When Sergius Paulus saw what had happened to Elymas, he believed in Jesus. The truth and power of what Paul and Barnabas were teaching about Jesus amazed him.

13 After that, Paul and the people with him traveled by sailboat from Paphos to the city of Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At Perga, John Mark left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. **14** Then Paul and Barnabas traveled by land from Perga and arrived in the city of Antioch in the district of Pisidia **in the province of Galatia**. On the Sabbath, they entered the Jewish meeting place and sat down **as rabbis did**. **15** Someone read aloud from what Moses had written in the books of the Law. Next someone read from what the prophets had written.

Then the leaders of the Jewish meeting place sent a message to Paul and Barnabas. They said, "Fellow Jews, if one of you wants to speak to the people here to encourage them, please speak to us now."

16 So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand **so that the people would listen to him**. Then he said, "Fellow Israelites and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen to me! **17** God, whom we Israelites worship, chose our ancestors to be his people. He caused them to become very numerous while they were foreigners living in Egypt. Then God did powerful things to lead them out of slavery there. **18** He put up with their disobedience for about forty years while they were in the wilderness. **19** He enabled the Israelites to conquer seven people groups who were then living in the region of Canaan. He gave their land to the Israelites to live in. **20** The Israelites spent about 450 years in Egypt and in the wilderness."

"After that, God chose people to serve as judges and as leaders to rule the Israelite people. The prophet Samuel was the last of these judges to rule them. **21** Then, while Samuel was still their leader, the people demanded that he choose a king to rule them. So God chose Saul, the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king. He ruled them for 40 years. **22** After God had rejected Saul from being king, he chose David to be their king. God said about him, 'I have seen that David, son of Jesse, is exactly the kind of man who desires what I desire. He will do everything that I want him to do.'"

23 "God brought one of David's descendants, Jesus, to us Israelite people to save us. This is what he had promised David and our other ancestors that he would do. **24** Before Jesus began his work, John the Baptizer preached to all of our Israelite people who came to him. He told them that they should turn away from their sinful behavior and ask God to forgive them. Then he would baptize them. **25** When John was about to finish the work that God gave him to do, he told the crowds, 'Do not think that I am the Messiah whom God promised to send, because I am not. But listen! The Messiah will soon come. He is so much greater than I am that I do not even deserve to be his slave and take the sandals off his feet.'"

26 "My fellow Israelites who are descendants of Abraham and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen! God has told all of us how he saves people. **27** The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. They heard someone read from the writings of the prophets **in their synagogues** on every Sabbath day. **But they did not understand**

what the prophets were saying. And so what the prophets predicted long ago came true when they condemned Jesus to death. 28 Many people accused Jesus of doing wicked things. They could not prove that he had done anything for which he deserved to die. But they still demanded that Pilate, the governor, condemn him to death. 29 They did to Jesus all the things that the prophets had written long ago that people would do to him. They killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. Then they took his body down from the cross and placed it in a tomb.
30 However, God brought him back to life after he was dead. 31 For many days he repeatedly appeared to his disciples who had come along with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who saw him are telling the people about him now."

32 "Right now we are proclaiming this good news to you. God made a promise to our Jewish ancestors. 33 God has kept that promise for us who are their descendants, and also for you who are not Jews, by making Jesus alive again. It is just like what David wrote in the second Psalm, when God was speaking about sending his Son:

> 'You are my Son;
> today I have become your Father.'

34 God has made the Messiah alive after he was dead, and God will never let him die again. God promised that to the Messiah when he said in the Scriptures,

> 35 'I will certainly help you, as I promised David that I would do.' That is why, in another psalm, David also says:
> 36 'You, God, will not allow the body of your Messiah to decay.' While David was living, he did what God wanted him to do. Then when he died his body was buried where his ancestors' bodies had been buried. Then David's body decayed. So he could not have been speaking about himself in this psalm. 37 But God made Jesus alive again after he died, and his body did not decay."

38 "So, fellow Israelites and other friends, we want you to know that God is promising to forgive your sins as a result of what Jesus has done. You could not become right with God by obeying the laws that Moses wrote because there were many laws that you were not able to obey. 39 But now God declares that all people who believe in Jesus are no longer guilty of any of the things that they have done that have displeased him. 40 So then be careful that God does

not judge you, as the prophets said that God would do! **41** **God said through the prophet Habakkuk,**

> ‘You who ridicule me, observe carefully what I am doing. You will certainly be amazed. Then you will die. You will be amazed because I plan to do something **terrible** while you are living. You would not believe that I would do that even if someone told you!’”

42 After Paul finished speaking, and as he and Barnabas were going away, many of the people there asked them to return on the next Sabbath and speak to them about these things again. **43** When the meeting was over, many people became disciples of Jesus, as Paul and Barnabas had encouraged them to do. These people were both Jews and non-Jews who worshiped God. Paul and Barnabas continued talking to them. They urged them to continue to trust that God kindly forgives people’s sins because of what Jesus did.

44 On the next Sabbath day, most of the people in Antioch came to the Jewish meeting place to hear Paul and Barnabas speak about Jesus. **45** The leaders of the Jews saw the large crowds of people that were coming to hear Paul and Barnabas. This made them extremely jealous. So they began to contradict the things that Paul was saying. They also insulted him. **46** Then, speaking very boldly, Paul and Barnabas said to those Jewish leaders, “We had to speak the message from God about Jesus to you Jews first before we proclaim it to non-Jews, because God commanded us to do that. But you are rejecting God’s message. By doing that, you have shown that you are not worthy of everlasting life. Therefore, we are leaving you, and now we will go to the non-Jewish people to tell them the message from God. **47** We are doing this because the Lord God has commanded us to do it. **He said in the Scriptures,** ‘I have chosen you to reveal things about me to non-Jewish people that will be like a light to them. I have chosen you to tell people everywhere in the world the message that I want to save them.’”

48 When the non-Jewish people heard those words, they rejoiced. They praised God for the message about Jesus. All of the non-Jewish people whom God had chosen for everlasting life put their trust in Jesus. **49** At that time, many of the believers traveled around throughout that region, spreading the message about the Lord Jesus everywhere they went.

50 However, some leaders of the Jews talked to some important women who worshiped with them. They also talked to the most important men in the city. The Jewish leaders

persuaded the non-Jewish city leaders to try to stop Paul and Barnabas. So those non-Jewish people led many citizens against Paul and Barnabas, and they made them leave their region.
51 As the two apostles were leaving, they shook the dust off their feet. This was to show those leaders that God had rejected them and would punish them. Then they left the city of Antioch and went to the city of Iconium. 52 Meanwhile, the people in Antioch who had believed in Jesus were very happy and the Holy Spirit was helping them greatly.

14 1 At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish meeting place. There they spoke very powerfully about the Lord Jesus. As a result, very many Jews and non-Jews believed in Jesus. 2 But some of the Jews refused to believe that message. They made some of the non-Jews angry and bitter toward the people who had put their trust in Jesus. 3 But Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speaking boldly about Jesus. Jesus enabled them to do many miracles. In this way, he showed people the truth of the message that God saves us even though we do not deserve it.

4 The people who lived in Iconium had two different opinions. Some agreed with the Jews. Others agreed with Paul and Barnabas. 5 Then the non-Jewish people and the Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas talked among themselves about how they could mistreat Paul and Barnabas. Some of the important men in that city agreed to help them. Together, they decided that they would kill Paul and Barnabas by throwing stones at them. 6 But Paul and Barnabas heard about their plan. They quickly went away to the district of Lycaonia. They went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in that district and to the surrounding area. 7 While they were in that area, they continually told the people the good news about Jesus.

8 In Lystra, they saw a man who was sitting down because he was crippled in his legs. When his mother gave birth to him, he had crippled legs, so he had never been able to walk.
9 He listened as Paul was speaking about Jesus. Paul looked directly at him and could see in the man's face that he believed that Jesus could make him well. 10 So Paul shouted out to him, "Stand up straight!" When the man heard that, his legs became strong. He immediately jumped up and began to walk around.

11 When the crowd saw Paul heal the crippled man, this made them think that Paul and Barnabas were the gods that they worshiped. So they shouted excitedly in their own Lycaonian

language, “Look! The gods have made themselves look like people and they have come down from the sky to help us!” **12** They began to say that Barnabas was probably the chief god, whose name was Zeus. And they began to say that Paul was Hermes, the messenger for the other gods. They believed this because Paul was the one who had been speaking. **13** People worshiped Zeus at a temple just outside the gates of the city. The priest who was there heard what Paul and Barnabas had done, so he came to the city gate, where many people had already gathered. He brought bulls with wreaths of flowers around their necks. The priest and the crowd of people wanted to kill the bulls as part of a ceremony to worship Paul and Barnabas. **14** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about that, they were very upset. They tore their own clothes **to show that they did not want the people to sacrifice to them**. They rushed among the people, shouting, **15** “People of Lystra, you must not kill those bulls to worship us! We are not gods! We are human beings who are just the same as you! We have come to tell you some good news about the one true God. You can stop worshiping other so-called gods, because they cannot help you. This true God made the sky, the land, the oceans, and everything that lives in them. **16** In the past, God allowed the non-Jewish people groups to worship whatever gods they wanted to worship. **17** Even so, God showed you non-Jewish people that he is a good God. He sent rain to make your crops grow. He gave you plenty of food so that you could enjoy your lives.” **18** Paul and Barnabas said all these things to the people. Even so, it was very difficult for them to keep the people from sacrificing those bulls to worship them.

19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and convinced many of the people of Lystra that Paul had not been telling them the truth. **The people who believed what those Jews said became angry with Paul.** They let those Jews throw stones at him until he fell to the ground. They all thought that he was dead, so they dragged him outside the city and left him lying there. **20** But some of the believers in Lystra came and stood around Paul, where he was lying on the ground. Suddenly Paul stood up! He went back into the city with the believers.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas left the city of Lystra and traveled to the city of Derbe. **21** In the city of Derbe they spent several days telling the people about Jesus. Many people there became believers. After that, Paul and Barnabas started on their way back home. They went again to Lystra. Then they went from there to Iconium. Then they went to the city of Antioch in the province of Pisidia. **22** In each place, they urged the believers to keep trusting Jesus. They told the believers, “We suffer many hardships in this world when we are allowing

God to rule over us.” **23** Paul and Barnabas chose leaders for each congregation. Before they left each place, they gathered the believers together and spent some time praying and fasting. Then they entrusted the leaders and other believers to Jesus, in whom they had believed, in order that he would care for them.

24 After Paul and Barnabas had traveled through the district of Pisidia, they went south to the district of Pamphylia. **25** In that district, they arrived at the town of Perga. They preached God’s message about Jesus to the people there. Then they went down to the seacoast at the town of Attalia. **26** There they got on a ship and went back to the city of Antioch in the province of Syria. The people there had chosen Paul and Barnabas to go to other places and preach. That was where the believers had asked God to help Paul and Barnabas do the work that they had now completed. **27** When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they called the believers together. Then Paul and Barnabas told them all that God had helped them to do. Specifically, they told them how God had enabled many non-Jewish people to believe in Jesus. **28** Then Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with the other believers for a long time.

15 **1** But then some Jewish believers from the province of Judea arrived in Antioch. They started telling the non-Jewish believers there, “You must receive circumcision **to show that you belong to God**, as Moses commanded in the laws that he received from God. If you do not do that, God will not save you.” **2** Paul and Barnabas had a big argument with those Jews. **They could not settle their disagreement,** so the believers at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers to Jerusalem. That way they could discuss this issue with the apostles and other leaders there.

3 After the believers in Antioch had sent Paul, Barnabas, and the others on their way, they traveled through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. When they stopped at different places along the way, they told the believers in those places that many non-Jews were putting their trust in Jesus. When the believers heard this, they rejoiced greatly. **4** When Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, the apostles, elders, and other believers there welcomed them. Then Paul and Barnabas reported the things that God had enabled them to do **among non-Jewish people**.

5 But some of the Jewish believers who were Pharisees stood up **to get the attention of the other believers**. They said to them, "The non-Jews who have believed in Jesus must receive circumcision. We must also tell them to obey the laws that God gave to Moses."

6 Then the apostles and the elders met together in order to talk about this issue. **7** After they had discussed it for a long time, Peter stood up **to get everyone's attention**. He said to them, "Fellow believers, you all know that a long time ago God chose me from among you **other apostles** for an important task. He wanted me to tell the non-Jewish people the good news about Jesus. God wanted them to believe in him. **8** God knows what every person is truly like. He showed me and others that he had accepted the non-Jews as his people. He did that by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as **he gave the Holy Spirit** to us. **9** God treated them in the same way that he treated us. He forgave their sins because they trusted in Jesus. **10** Listen carefully! God has shown what he wants, so you should not be trying to promote something else. You should not be trying to force non-Jewish believers to obey our Jewish laws! That would be like putting a heavy burden on them. Our ancestors were not able to obey those laws. We Jews today have not been able to obey them either. **11** We are confident that God saves us Jews from our sins because of what the Lord Jesus did for us. And we are confident that God will save in the same way those non-Jews who believe in Jesus."

12 After Peter had spoken, Barnabas and Paul told about the many great miracles that God had enabled them to do among the non-Jewish people. **The miracles showed that God had accepted these non-Jews.** The people who heard Barnabas and Paul tell about these miracles were so fascinated that all they did was listen. None of them said anything.

13 When Barnabas and Paul had finished speaking, James, the leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem, spoke to everyone. He said, "Fellow believers, listen to me. **14** Simon Peter has told you how God previously showed that he cared about the non-Jews. God did that by choosing from among them a group of people who would belong to him. **15** What God said long ago, as we can read in the writings of one of the prophets, agrees with that:

> **16** Later on, I will help the Israelites again. I will restore the kingdom of David that has been conquered and destroyed. **I will do that by making one of the descendants of David the king of Israel again.** It will be as if I was rebuilding a house after it had been torn down.

17 I will do this so that the rest of the people in the world will want me to be their
Lord. This will include even the non-Jewish people whom I have chosen to
belong to me. You can be certain that this will happen because I, the Lord God,
have said that I will do it.
18 I told my people long ago that I would do this."

19 James continued to speak. He said, "Therefore I think that we should not tell the non-Jewish people who are becoming disciples of Jesus that they have to obey all of our Jewish laws and rituals. **20** Instead, we should write a letter to them about only a few things. They should not eat meat that people have offered to idols. They should not have sexual relations with someone to whom they are not married. They should not eat meat from animals that people have strangled to kill them for butchering. They should not eat or drink any blood. **21** **We should tell the Gentiles not to do these things because they would be very offensive to Jews. The laws that Moses wrote forbid these things. Jews would expect Gentiles to know that God would not want them to do these things because** people read those laws aloud in the Jewish meeting places on every Sabbath day. They have done this in cities in many different places for a very long time."

22 The apostles and the elders, along with all the other believers in Jerusalem, agreed with what James said. So they decided that they should choose men from the church in Jerusalem and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Those men would let the believers there know what the leaders at Jerusalem had decided. So they chose Judas the son of Sabbas and Silas. These were both leaders of the believers at Jerusalem. **23** They wrote the following letter, which they asked Judas and Silas to take to the believers at Antioch:

"We apostles and elders who are your fellow believers send our greetings to you.
We are writing this to you non-Jewish believers who live in the city of Antioch
and other places in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia.
24 We have heard that some men from our church came to you and taught you
things that were different from what you learned when you first believed in
Jesus. We have heard that what they told you made you upset. We want you to
know that we did not send these men to you.
25 We met together and we all agreed that it would be good to choose some men
and ask them to go to you. We are sending them along with Barnabas and Paul,
whom we love very much.

26 Those two have put their lives in danger because they serve our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

27 We have also sent Judas and Silas to you. They will tell you the same things that we are writing.

28 We believe that the Holy Spirit has shown us that we should not require you to obey all of the Jewish laws. That would be difficult and unnecessary. Instead, we only require you to obey the following instructions:

29 You should not eat food that people have sacrificed to idols.

You should not eat or drink any blood.

You should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them.

You should not have sexual relations with someone to whom you are not married.

If you avoid doing these things, you will be doing what is right. We wish you well."

30 Then the apostles and elders sent Barnabas, Paul, Judas, and Silas on their way. They traveled from the city of Jerusalem to the city of Antioch. They assembled the believers there and read the letter to them. **31** When the believers there read the letter, they were glad, because its message encouraged them. **32** Judas and Silas were prophets. They said many things to encourage the Gentile believers. They helped them to trust in Jesus even more.

33 Judas and Silas stayed in Antioch for a long time. Then, when they were ready to return to Jerusalem, the believers at Antioch wished them well and they left. **34** 13 [But Silas thought it would be best for them to stay there. So Judas went back to Jerusalem alone.] **35** However, Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch. There they and many others taught the believers and shared the good news about Jesus.

36 After a while Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in every city where we previously proclaimed the good news about Jesus. That way we can find out how well they are continuing to believe in and obey Jesus." **37** **Barnabas agreed that it would be good to go back and visit these believers.** But Barnabas said that he wanted to take John, whose other name was Mark, along with them again. **38** However, Paul told Barnabas that he thought it was a bad idea to take Mark with them. Paul said this because Mark had left them when they were previously in the region of Pamphylia. Mark had not continued to work with them.

39 Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with each other about whether they should bring John Mark with them. So they separated from each other. Barnabas went on a journey of his own and took Mark with him. They sailed on a ship to the island of Cyprus. 40 Paul decided to travel with Silas. The believers in Antioch asked God graciously to help them. Then Paul and Silas departed from Antioch. 41 Paul traveled with Silas through the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. In those places, they helped the groups of believers to trust in Jesus even more.

16 1 Paul and Silas went to the cities of Derbe and Lystra and visited the believers there. Now a believer whose name was Timothy lived in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish woman who believed in Jesus. His father, however, was a Greek man. Because this man was not Jewish, he did not observe the law of Moses. 2 The believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy. 3 Paul wanted to take Timothy with him when he went to other places, so he arranged for someone to circumcise Timothy. Paul did that so that the Jews who lived in those other places would accept Timothy. Those Jews knew that Timothy's non-Jewish father would not have circumcised him.

4 So Timothy went with Paul and Silas, and they traveled to many other towns. In each town they encouraged the believers to do what the apostles and elders in Jerusalem had told them to do.

5 They helped the believers in those towns to trust Jesus even more. More people became believers every day.

6 Paul and his companions wanted to share the good news about Jesus in the province of Asia. But the Holy Spirit showed them that he did not want them to do that. So they went instead through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, trying to discover where the Holy Spirit wanted them to share the good news. 7 They arrived at the border of the province of Mysia. From there they wanted to go north into the province of Bithynia. But once again the Holy Spirit showed them that he did not want them to share the good news there. 8 So they went through the province of Mysia and arrived at Troas, a city by the sea. 9 That night God gave Paul a vision in which he saw a man from the province of Macedonia. That man was begging Paul, "Come across the sea to Macedonia and help us!" 10 I, Luke, joined Paul and his companions in Troas. After Paul saw that vision, we made arrangements right away to travel to

Macedonia. We were certain that God had called us to share the good news about Jesus with the people there.

11 We got on a boat and sailed from Troas right to the island of Samothrace. The next day we sailed to the city of Neapolis. **12** Then we left Neapolis and went to Philippi. It was a very important city in the province of Macedonia. Many Roman citizens lived there. We decided to stay in Philippi for a while.

13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate and walked down to the river. **Since there was no synagogue in the city,** we knew that Jewish people would gather to pray at a place like that. When we arrived, we saw some women who had gathered to pray. So we sat down and began to tell them about Jesus. **14** A woman whose name was Lydia was one of the women who was listening to Paul. She was from the city of Thyatira, She was a merchant who sold luxurious purple cloth. She believed in the God of Israel and worshiped him. The Lord God enabled her to understand what Paul was saying**, and she trusted in Jesus**. **15** Paul baptized Lydia and the others who lived in her house. Then she said to us, "If you recognize that I believe sincerely in Jesus, please come to my house and stay there." So we accepted her invitation and stayed at her house.

16 Another day, as we were going to the place where people gathered to pray, we met a young woman who was a slave. An evil spirit was giving her the power to tell what would happen to people in the future. People paid a lot of money to the men who were her owners so that she would tell them what was going to happen to them. **17** This young woman followed Paul and the rest of us everywhere we went. She was continually shouting, "These men serve the God who is the greatest of all gods! They are telling you how God can save you!" **18** She continued to do this for many days. Finally, Paul became so upset that he turned toward the young woman and spoke to the evil spirit that was in her. He said, "In the name of Jesus the Messiah, I command you to come out of her!" Immediately the evil spirit left her. **19** Then her owners realized that she could no longer predict what would happen to people. That meant she could no longer earn money for them. That made them very angry. They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them to the open area of the city where its rulers were **so that the rulers could judge them**. **20** The owners of the young woman brought them to the city rulers. They told them, "These men are Jews, and they are greatly troubling the people in our city. **21** They are teaching that we should do things that our Roman laws do not allow us to do!" **22** Many

people in the crowd joined those who were accusing Paul and Silas. **This convinced the Roman rulers that they must be bad men.** So the rulers told soldiers to tear the shirts off Paul and Silas and beat them with wooden rods. **23** So the soldiers beat Paul and Silas badly with rods. After that, they took them and put them into the prison. They told the jailer to make sure they did not get out. **24** Because the officials had told him to do that, the jailer put Paul and Silas into the room that was farthest inside the prison. There he made them sit down on the floor and stretch out their legs. Then he fastened their ankles in holes between two large pieces of wood so that Paul and Silas could not move their legs.

25 About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God by singing songs. The other prisoners were listening to them. **26** Suddenly there was a very strong earthquake that shook the whole jail. As soon as the earthquake struck, it caused all of the doors of the jail to open and all of the chains that fastened the prisoners to fall off. **27** The jailer woke up and saw that the earthquake had opened the doors of the jail. He thought that the prisoners had left the jail. So he pulled out his sword to kill himself**, because he knew that the city rulers would kill him if the prisoners had escaped**. **28** Paul saw the jailer and shouted to him, "Do not kill yourself! We prisoners are all here!" **29** The jailer shouted to someone to bring torches. **It was midnight and dark, and he wanted to be sure that all the prisoners were still in the prison**. He hurried in **to the inner cell where he had put Paul and Silas**. The jailer was shaking with fear**, because the rulers had told him to guard them carefully. When he saw that Paul and Silas were still there,** he knelt down in front of them to honor them **for sparing his life by not escaping**. **30** Then he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail. He asked them, "Sirs, I want God to save me. What do I need to do?" **31** They answered, "If you put your trust in Jesus as your Lord, God will save you. God will also save everyone in your family if they trust in Jesus."

32 Then Paul and Silas spoke about Jesus to him and everyone in his family. **33** The jailer washed their wounds, even though it was the middle of the night. Then right away Paul and Silas baptized him and everyone in his family. **34** Then the jailer brought Paul and Silas into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his whole family were all very happy because they had believed in God.

35 The next morning, the city rulers told some officers to go to the prison and tell the jailer, "Let those two prisoners go now!" **36** When the jailer heard this, he went and told Paul, "The

city rulers have told me to let you go. So you two can leave the prison now. Do not worry, no one will arrest you again." **37** But Paul said to the jailer, with the officers listening, "The city rulers had their soldiers beat us in front of a crowd. Without convicting us of any crime, they put us in prison. They did those things to us even though we are Roman citizens. And now they want to send us away without telling anyone! We will not accept that! Those city rulers must come themselves and free us from prison." **38** So the officers went and told the city rulers that Paul and Silas were refusing to leave the prison unless the rulers came and released them personally. When the city rulers learned that they were Roman citizens, they became very afraid. **They knew that they had done the wrong thing by beating Roman citizens and putting them in prison without a trial.** **39** So the city rulers came to Paul and Silas and told them that they were sorry for what they had done to them. The city rulers brought them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city. **40** After Paul and Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia's house. There they met with her and the other believers. They encouraged the believers to continue trusting in the Lord Jesus. Then Paul, Silas, and Timothy left the city of Philippi. **I, Luke, remained there for some time.**

17 **1** Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia. Then they came to the city of Thessalonica. There was a Jewish meeting place there. **2** On the Sabbath day, Paul went to the meeting place as he usually did. For three weeks he went there on each Sabbath day. He proved to the people from the Scriptures **that Jesus was the Messiah**. **3** Paul showed very clearly that in the Scriptures the prophets wrote that the Messiah would have to die but then become alive again. He said, "I am telling you about Jesus. This man is the Messiah." **4** Some of the Jews in the synagogue believed what Paul said about Jesus. They began to meet with Paul and Silas. Many non-Jewish people who worshiped God and many influential women also believed the message about Jesus. They too began to meet with Paul and Silas.

5 But some leaders of the Jews became jealous **because so many people were believing what Paul taught**. So they went to the open area of the city and found some bad men to help them. They used those men to gather a crowd and cause a great disturbance in the city. The crowd ran to the house of a man named Jason, where they thought Paul and Silas were staying. They wanted to bring Paul and Silas outside to where the crowd of people was. **6** They discovered that Paul and Silas were not at the house. However, they found Jason and dragged him and

some of the other believers who were with him to where the city rulers were. They told the rulers, “These men who have been disturbing the way that people live have now come here also, **7** and this man Jason has invited them to stay at his house. These other men whom we have brought to you are also friendly with them. They are all disloyal to Caesar our king. They say that another person, whose name is Jesus, is the real king!” **8** When the city rulers and the crowd of people that had gathered heard that, they became very upset. **9** The city rulers made Jason and the other believers pay a fine. **But they told them that they would give the money back to them if Paul and Silas did not cause any more trouble.** Then the city rulers let Jason and the other believers go.

10 So that same night, the believers sent Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica to the town of Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived there, they went to the Jewish meeting place. **11** Most of the Jews in Thessalonica had not been willing to listen to God’s message. But the Jews who lived in Berea were very willing to listen. They listened carefully to the message about Jesus. Every day they read the Scriptures for themselves to find out whether what Paul said about Jesus was true. **12** Because of Paul’s teaching, many of the Jewish people believed in Jesus, and also some of the important non-Jewish women and many non-Jewish men believed in him.

13 But then the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the message from God about Jesus. So they went to Berea and said things to the people there that made them very angry with Paul. **14** So right away some of the believers in Berea took Paul to the seacoast to go to another city. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. **15** When Paul and the men who were taking him arrived at the coast, they got on a boat and went to the city of Athens. Then Paul said to the men who had come with him, “Tell Silas and Timothy to come to me here in Athens as soon as they can.” Then those men left Athens and returned to Berea.

16 In Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to come. In the meantime, he walked around in the city. He became very distressed because there were many idols in the city. **17** So Paul went to the Jewish meeting place and talked about Jesus with the Jews there. He also spoke with the Greeks who had accepted what Jews believe. He also went every day to the open area of the city and had conversations with the people he met there.

18 Paul met some teachers who liked to talk about what people believe. Some of them called themselves Epicureans, and others called themselves Stoics. They told Paul what they

believed, and they asked him what he believed. Then some of them said to one another, “He really does not know what he is talking about.” But others said, “He seems to be teaching a philosophy about some gods that we have never heard of.” Those others said that because Paul was telling them that Jesus had died and then had become alive again**, and they thought that Resurrection was the name of a god**.

19 So they invited Paul to come with them to the place where the philosophers in the city met. They told Paul, “Please come with us, because we would like to know what this new message is that you are teaching people. **20** You are teaching us some things that we do not understand. We want to know what they mean.” **21** The people of Athens and the people from other regions who had come to live there greatly enjoyed talking about new ideas.

22 The philosophers asked Paul to stand in the middle of their group. He did, and then he said, “People of Athens, I have seen many of the things you do, and I can tell how religious you are. **23** I say that because, while I was walking through your city, I saw the things that you worship, I even saw an altar on which someone had carved these words: THIS HONORS A GOD WHOM WE DO NOT KNOW. So now let me tell you about that God whom you worship but whom you do not know.

24 He is the God who made the world and everything in it. He rules over all beings in heaven and on earth. He does not live in temples that people have built. **25** He does not need to have people do anything for him. He is the one who makes people alive. He gives them everything they need.

26 In the beginning, God created one couple, and from them God produced all the people groups that now live everywhere on the earth. God determined where and when each people group would live. **27** He wanted people to realize that they need him. Then maybe they would look for him and find him. People will find God if they sincerely look for him, because he is very close to each one of us. **28** It is because of God that we live, move, and exist, as one of you has said, ‘Because we are his children.’

29 Therefore, because we are God’s children, we should not think that God is like an idol that a person would design and make out of gold, silver, or stone. **30** In the past, people did not know what God wanted them to do. So God did not punish them for what they did. But now

God commands all people everywhere to stop doing wrong things. **31** God tells us that on a day that he has chosen, he is going to judge all of us justly. God will have Jesus, the man he has chosen, do the judging. God has made sure that we understand this by making Jesus alive again after he died."

32 When the philosophers heard Paul say that a man had become alive again after he had died, some of them laughed at him. But others asked him to come back and tell them about it another day. **33** After they said that, Paul walked away. **34** However, some of the people went with Paul and believed the message about Jesus. Among those who believed in Jesus was a man named Dionysius who was a member of the council. Also, there were a woman named Damaris and some other people with them who believed.

18 **1** After that, Paul left the city of Athens and went to the city of Corinth. **2** In Corinth Paul met a Jew whose name was Aquila. He was from the region of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had recently come from the city of Rome in Italy. They left Rome because Claudius, the Roman emperor, had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul introduced himself to Aquila and Priscilla. **3** Aquila and Priscilla made tents to earn money. Paul also made tents. So he stayed with them and they worked together. **4** Every Sabbath, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place. There he conversed with both Jews and non-Jews. He helped many of them to believe in Jesus.

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from the region of Macedonia, Paul felt strongly that he should devote all of his time to proclaiming the good news. So he kept telling the Jews sincerely that Jesus was the Messiah. **6** But the Jews argued with Paul and said bad things about him. So he shook the dust off his clothes **to show that he wanted to have nothing to do with them any more**. He said to them, "If God punishes you, it is your responsibility! I have done everything I could to show you the truth! From now on I will talk to people who are not Jewish!" **7** So Paul left the Jewish meeting place and went into a house that was next to it, and he preached there. Titius Justus, the owner of the house, was a non-Jewish man who worshiped God. **8** After that, the ruler of the Jewish meeting place, whose name was Crispus, and all of his family believed in Jesus. Many other people in Corinth heard about Crispus and his family. They also believed in Jesus and Paul baptized them.

9 One night Paul had a vision in which Jesus spoke to him. He said, “Do not be afraid of the people who are against you. Keep telling people about me. 10 You can keep speaking confidently because I will help you. No one will be able to attack you and hurt you, because there are many people in this city who love me and will defend you.” 11 So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half. He shared the good news about Jesus with the people there.

12 Then a man named Gallio became the Roman governor of the province of Achaia. The Jewish leaders thought he would take their side so they got together and seized Paul. They brought him to the governor and made accusations against him. 13 They said, “This man is teaching people to worship God in ways that Roman law does not permit.” 14 Paul was about to say something to defend himself. But Gallio said to the Jewish leaders, “If this man had done something terribly wrong that broke our Roman laws, naturally I would listen to what you Jews want to tell me. 15 However, you are only complaining about things that Paul has been saying. You are arguing about who deserves what name. These are disputes about your own Jewish laws. So you must settle this yourselves. These are not the kind of things that deserve my attention!” 16 After Gallio said that, he told some soldiers to make the Jewish leaders leave the court. 17 But instead of leaving right away, the Jewish leaders grabbed the man who was in charge of their synagogue. His name was Sosthenes. They beat him right there in front of the judge’s seat because they thought Paul had persuaded him to believe in Jesus. Gallio did nothing to stop them.

18 Paul stayed with the believers in Corinth for many more days. Then he got on a ship with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for the province of Syria. Paul left Silas and Timothy in Corinth. He got his hair cut off in Cenchrea because of a vow that he had made. 19 They arrived at the city of Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there.

Paul himself entered the Jewish meeting place and had conversations with the Jews there about Jesus. 20 They asked him to stay longer, but he told them that he could not stay. 21 But as Paul left, he told the Jews in Ephesus, “I promise that I will come back if God wants me to.” Then Paul got on a ship and sailed away from Ephesus.

22 When the ship came to the city of Caesarea, Paul got off. He went from there to Jerusalem and visited with the believers there. Then he returned to the city of Antioch, where he had begun his trip.

23 Paul remained for some time with the believers in Antioch. Then he left and traveled to many cities in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. He helped the believers in each city to believe more steadfastly in Jesus.

24 While Paul was going through Galatia and Phrygia, a Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was from the city of Alexandria, and he spoke very well. He had carefully studied the Scriptures. **25** Other believers had taught Apollos how Jesus wanted people to live. He enthusiastically taught those things correctly to the people in Ephesus. However, he was not teaching everything about Jesus. He only knew that John the Baptizer had said to repent and receive baptism to get ready for Jesus the Messiah. **26** Apollos went to the Jewish meeting place and told the people there the things he had learned about Jesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard what he taught, they asked him to come to their home. There they taught him more about Jesus.

27 When Apollos decided that he would like to go to the region of Achaia, the believers in Ephesus told him that it would be good for him to do that. So they wrote a letter to the believers in Achaia saying that they should welcome Apollos. After he got there, he did much to help those whom God had kindly enabled to believe in Jesus. **28** The leaders of the Jews were denying that Jesus was the Messiah. But as many other people listened, Apollos showed convincingly that they were wrong. He did that by proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

19 **1** While Apollos was still in the city of Corinth, Paul **finished visiting the churches in Phrygia and Galatia. Then he** traveled through the province of Asia and came to the city of Ephesus. There he met some people who said that they were believers. **2** He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed God's message?" They answered, "No, we did not. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." **3** So Paul asked, "So when someone baptized you, what did you know?" They replied, "We believed what John the Baptizer taught." **4** Paul said, "John's baptism was a sign that people were giving up their evil thoughts and deeds and wanting to obey God. But John also told people that the Messiah would soon appear and that they should believe in him. He was talking about Jesus." **5** When those men heard that, they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul then baptized them because they believed. **6** After that, Paul placed his hands on their heads one by one, and each of them

received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in languages that they had not learned. They also spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave them. **7** There were about 12 men whom Paul baptized and who received the Holy Spirit.

8 For three months after that, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place in Ephesus on each Sabbath and preached there. He taught the people convincingly about how God should rule their lives. **9** But some of the Jews would not believe the message and did not want to hear it any more. In front of everyone in the synagogue, they said bad things about believing in Jesus. So Paul left them and took the believers with him to meet every day in a large room where a man whose name was Tyrannus usually taught people. **10** For two years Paul taught people there. In this way, most of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in the region of Asia heard the message about Jesus.

11 God also gave Paul the power to do great miracles. **12** If those who were sick could not come to Paul, people would take pieces of cloth that Paul had touched and place them on the sick people. When they did this, the sick people would become well and the evil spirits would leave them.

13 There were some Jews who traveled from place to place, commanding the evil spirits in those places to depart from people. Some of them tried to make evil spirits come out of people by commanding them to leave by the authority of Jesus. When those Jews were with a person who had an evil spirit, one of them would say, "I command you to come out by the authority of the man named Jesus whom Paul teaches about!" **14** Specifically, there were seven men who were doing this. They were the sons of a Jewish man named Sceva, who was a chief priest.
15 **One day two of the sons of Sceva were in the house of a man who had an evil spirit. They tried to make the spirit come out. But it did not come out.** Instead, the evil spirit said to them, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but no one has given you authority to make me leave this man!"
16 **After the evil spirit said that,** suddenly it made the man jump on them. He knocked down these two sons of Sceva and hurt them. He tore off their clothes and wounded them. They ran out of the house **to save their lives**. **17** Soon people throughout Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews, heard what had happened. They realized that they should regard Jesus with great awe, and they spoke of him very respectfully.

18 At that time, many people in the group of believers came to their leaders. While other believers were listening, they told about the evil things that they had been doing. **19** Now many of the believers had been sorcerers. They took their scrolls that told about spells and curses and burned them in a place where everyone could see them. The believers added up how much the scrolls were worth. They were worth 50,000 silver coins.

20 In this powerful way, many people heard the message about Jesus and believed in him.

21 And after all of this happened, the Holy Spirit led Paul to decide to go to Jerusalem. Paul planned to visit the believers in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia first. He said, "After I have been to Jerusalem, I must also go to Rome." **22** So Paul sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to the province of Macedonia. But he stayed for a while in the city of Ephesus in the province of Asia.

23 But soon after that, people in Ephesus began to make a great amount of trouble because of Jesus and the teaching about him. **24** This happened because of a man in Ephesus whose name was Demetrius. He was a craftsman who worked with silver metal. He made statues of the goddess Artemis out of silver. Demetrius paid a lot of money to the workers who made these idols.

25 Demetrius called together the craftsmen and the workers who made the idols. He said to them, "You all know that we make a lot of money doing our work. **26** But you know very well that Paul has led many people in Ephesus not to buy the statues that we make. In fact, the people from many other towns in our province no longer want to buy what we make. Paul tells people that the gods that we make are not gods **and that we should not worship them**. **27** **If people keep listening to Paul,** there is a risk that we will go out of business. Even worse, people will no longer come to the temple of our great goddess Artemis. They will not believe that she is worthy to worship. They will believe that she is not a goddess at all. Yet people throughout the province of Asia and even the whole world worship her!" **28** Then all the people there became very angry at Paul when they heard what Demetrius said. They began to shout, "The goddess Artemis of the Ephesians is great!" **29** This shouting made the people in the city very confused. They ran as a crowd to the city stadium **to try to find out what was happening**. Gaius and Aristarchus, two men from Macedonia who traveled with Paul, were out in the city. Some people took hold of them and dragged them to the stadium. **30** Now Paul wanted to go into the

stadium to talk to the people. However, the other believers would not let him go there. **31** Also, some city rulers who were friends of Paul heard what was happening. They sent someone to warn Paul not to go into the theater.

32 In the stadium, the people were very confused. Because they were confused, some were shouting one thing while others were shouting something else. But most of them did not even know why they were all in the stadium! **33** Then some of the Jews in the stadium pushed a man whose name was Alexander to the front of the crowd so that he could speak to the people. Some of the others there told him how he could do that. So Alexander put his hands up to get the crowd to stop shouting. He wanted to tell them that the Jews had not caused the trouble. **34** But many of the non-Jewish people knew that Alexander was a Jew. **They knew that the Jews did not worship the goddess Artemis.** So for two hours the non-Jews shouted together, "Great is the goddess Artemis of the Ephesians!"

35 Then one of the city rulers made the crowd stop shouting. He said to them, "My fellow citizens, you do not need to be concerned about the worship of Artemis. People throughout the world know that our city of Ephesus is a special place where the goddess Artemis has her temple. Indeed, the sacred image of her fell down to us from heaven! **36** These are established facts. So you should be quiet now. Do not do anything foolish. **37** You should not have brought these two men here. They work together with Paul, but they have not done anything evil. They have not gone into our temples and taken things from there, and they have not spoken evil of our goddess. **38** If Demetrius and his fellow workmen want to accuse anyone of doing anything bad, they should do it in the right way. The courts are in session. There are judges present whom the government has appointed. They can present their case before the judges in court. **39** And if you are concerned about anything else, you should ask your rulers about it when those rulers meet together. **40** You should really not have rushed here shouting, because the Roman government may accuse us of having a riot today. If the rulers ask me what you were all shouting about, I will not know how to answer them. There was no good reason for it." **41** That is what the city ruler said to the crowd. Then he told them all to go home**, and they did go to their homes**.

20 **1** Then, after the people at Ephesus had stopped rioting, Paul called the believers together. He urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Soon after that, he told them

goodbye and left to go to the region of Macedonia. **2** Then Paul traveled through Macedonia and said many things to encourage the believers there. Then he continued on to Greece. **3** Paul then stayed in Greece for three months. He planned to return to Syria by ship. But he heard that some of the Jews there were planning to kill him as he traveled. So he decided to travel by land. Once again he went through Macedonia. **4** Now the men who were going to travel with him to Jerusalem were Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus, who were from the city of Thessalonica; Gaius, who was from the city of Derbe; Timothy, who was from the region of Galatia; and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were from the province of Asia. **5** **I, Luke, joined Paul when he came back through the city of Philippi.** Now the other seven men sailed to the city of Troas before we did, so they waited there for the two of us. **6** But Paul and I stayed in the city of Philippi until the end of the festival when Jewish people eat bread without yeast. Then we got on a ship that was going to the city of Troas. After five days we arrived there and met the other men who had traveled ahead of us. We all stayed in Troas for seven days.

7 While we were in Troas, we gathered together on the first day of the week to share a meal with the other believers. **We met on that day because it was the day when Jesus became alive again after he died.** Paul was planning to leave Troas the next day, so when he spoke to the believers, he spoke for a long time. He kept speaking until midnight. **8** We had gathered in an upstairs room. Many oil lamps were burning there. **9** Now a young man whose name was Eutychus was in the room. He was seated on the sill of an open window. As Paul continued talking for a long time, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, he was sound asleep. He slipped out of the window and fell three stories down to the ground. Some of the believers went down immediately and picked him up. But he was dead. **10** Paul also went down. He lay down and stretched out on top of the young man. He also put his arms around him. Then he said to the people who were standing around, “Do not worry, because he is alive again!” **11** Then Paul went back up to the room where he was meeting with the believers. They shared a meal together. Afterwards he talked at length with the believers, until the sun came up. Then he left. **12** Before Paul left, the believers brought the young man who had fallen out the window back to the meeting. Everyone there was extremely encouraged to see that he was alive again.

13 We then went to the ship. But Paul did not get on the ship with us in Troas, because he wanted to walk by himself to the town of Assos. So the rest of us got on the ship and sailed for Assos. We planned to bring Paul on board there. 14 And when we met Paul in Assos, he got on the ship with us and we sailed to the city of Mitylene. 15 The day after we reached Mitylene, we sailed from there and arrived at a place near the island of Chios. The day after that, we sailed to the island of Samos. The next day we left Samos and sailed to the city of Miletus. 16 Paul did not want to have a delay in Asia. So he had decided we should go to Miletus, south of Ephesus and past its harbor. He was trying to travel quickly because he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem, if possible, by the time of the Pentecost festival, and it was almost time for that festival.

17 So when the ship arrived at Miletus, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus to ask the elders of the group of believers there to come to talk with him.

18 When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, "You know very well how I acted among you the entire time that I was with you, from the first day when I arrived here in the province of Asia until the day I left. 19 You know how I kept serving Jesus very humbly and how I sometimes wept. You also know how I suffered because the Jews who were not believers often tried to harm me. 20 You also know that, when I preached God's message to you, I never left out anything that would help you. You know that I taught you God's message when many people were present, and I also went to your homes and taught you there. 21 I preached both to Jews and to non-Jews. I told them all that they must stop their sinful behavior and start obeying God. They must believe in our Lord Jesus."

22 "And now, I want you to know, I am going to Jerusalem. I am going because the Holy Spirit has clearly shown me that I must go there, and I must obey him. I do not know exactly what will happen to me there. 23 But I do know that in each city I have visited, the Holy Spirit has told me that in Jerusalem people will put me in prison and will cause me to suffer. 24 But I do not care even if people kill me, so long as I am first able to finish the work that the Lord Jesus has told me to do. He told me to tell people the good news that God saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. 25 I have preached to you the message that God is reigning as king. But now, I must tell you, I know that today is the last time that you fellow believers will ever see me. 26 So I want you all to understand right now that if anyone who has heard me

preach dies without trusting in Jesus, it is not my fault, [27] After all, I have told you everything that God has revealed about how he saves us. [28] You leaders must continue to believe and obey God's message, and you must also help all the other believers to do the same. The Holy Spirit has given you the responsibility of caring for them. Jesus died on the cross to make those who believe in him his own special people. [29] I know very well that after I leave, people who teach lies will come among you and will do great harm to the believers [30] Even some leaders from your own group will start teaching believers the wrong things. They will teach those wrong things to try to get disciples of their own. [31] So be careful that all of you keep believing the true message about Jesus! Remember that throughout the three years I was with you, I warned each one of you consistently and very sincerely that you should stay faithful to Jesus."

[32] "And now as I leave you, I ask God to protect you and help you to keep believing the message that he saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. If you continue believing that message, it will make you strong, and God will give you the good things that he has promised to all of those who belong to him.

[33] As for me, I never tried to get money or fine clothing from anyone. [34] You certainly know that I worked with my hands to earn the money that my helpers and I needed. [35] In everything that I did, I showed you that we should work hard in order to have enough money to give some to those who are needy. We should remember that our Lord Jesus himself said, 'A person is happier when he gives to others than when he receives from them.'"

[36] When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of the elders and prayed. [37] They all cried a lot, and they hugged Paul and kissed him. [38] They were very sad because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they all went with him to the ship.

21 [1] Then, after we said goodbye to the elders from Ephesus, we got back onto the ship and sailed directly to the island of Cos. There the ship stopped for the night. The next day we sailed in the ship from Cos to the island of Rhodes. There the ship stopped again. The day after that, we went to the town of Patara. The ship was going no farther than that. [2] At Patara we left that ship, but we learned that there was another ship that would be leaving soon and going to the region of Phoenicia. So we got on that ship, and it left. [3] Now as we traveled across the sea, we saw the island of Cyprus. We sailed to the south of that island. We continued sailing

until we arrived at the city of Tyre in the province of Syria. The ship had to stay there for several days because its workers needed to unload the cargo.

4 But we learned where the believers in Tyre lived, so we went and stayed with them for seven days. God's Spirit revealed to some of the believers that Paul would suffer if he went to Jerusalem. So they encouraged Paul not to go there. **5** But when it was time for the ship to leave again, we prepared to continue on our way to Jerusalem. When we left Tyre, all the men and their wives and children went with us to the edge of the sea. We all knelt down there on the sand and prayed. **6** Then we all said goodbye to each other. We who were traveling with Paul got onto the ship with him, and the other believers returned to where they lived in Tyre.

7 After we left Tyre, we continued on that ship to the city of Ptolemais. There were believers there, and we greeted them and stayed with them that night. **8** Then, on the next day, we left Ptolemais and sailed to the city of Caesarea. There we went to visit Philip. He had a reputation for telling others how to become disciples of Jesus. He was one of the seven men whom the believers in Jerusalem had chosen to take care of the widows. He invited us to stay in his home. **9** Now he had four daughters who were not married. Each of them frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave them.

10 And after we had been in Philip's house for several days, a believer whose name was Agabus arrived in Caesarea from the district of Judea. He frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave him. **11** Coming over to where we were, he removed the belt from Paul's waist. He tied his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the hands and feet of the owner of this belt like this. Then they will ask the non-Jewish people to arrest him as a criminal.'" **12** When the rest of us heard that, we and the other believers there pled with Paul, "Please do not go up to Jerusalem!" **13** But Paul replied, "Please stop crying and trying to discourage me from going! You should not cry, because I am willing to go to prison and also to die in Jerusalem because I serve the Lord Jesus." **14** Then we realized that Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem. So we did not try any longer to stop him. We said, "May the Lord's will be done!"

15 Then, after those days in Caesarea, we prepared our possessions and left to go by land to Jerusalem. **16** Now some of the believers from Caesarea also went with us. They took us to

stay in the house of a man whose name was Mnason. He was from the island of Cyprus. He had believed in Jesus when people were first beginning to hear the message about him.

17 And when we arrived in Jerusalem, a group of the believers greeted us happily.
18 Then, the next day, Paul and the rest of us went to speak with James. **He was the main leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem.** All of the other leaders were also there. **19** So Paul greeted them, and then he told them all of the things that God had enabled him to do among the non-Jewish people. **20** And when they heard what God had done, James and the other elders thanked God. Then one of them said to Paul, "Brother, you know that there are very many thousands of us Jewish people who have believed in the Lord Jesus. You also know that we continue very carefully to obey the laws that Moses gave us. **21** But people have told our fellow Jewish believers that when you are with non-Jews, you tell the Jewish believers who live among them that they should stop obeying the laws of Moses. People say that you tell those Jewish believers not to circumcise their sons and not to practice our other customs. **We do not believe that they are telling the truth about you.** **22** But our fellow Jewish believers will surely learn that you have come here to Jerusalem. **They will be angry with you because of what they have heard about you.** So you need to do something to show them that what they have heard about you is not true. **23** So please do what we suggest to you. There are four men among us who have made a vow to God. **24** Go with these men to the temple courts and do the ceremonies that are necessary for you and for them to be able to worship in the temple. Then, when it is time for them to offer the sacrifices that they need to offer because they have made these vows, pay for what they offer. After that, they can shave their heads to show that they have done what they promised God they would do. When people see you in the courts of the temple with those men, they will know that what people have told them about you is not true. Instead, they will know that you obey all our Jewish laws. **25** Now as for the non-Jewish believers, we elders here in Jerusalem talked about which of our laws they should obey. We wrote them a letter telling them what we decided. We wrote that they should not eat meat that people have offered as a sacrifice to any idol. They should not eat any blood. They should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them. We also told them that they should not have sexual relations with someone to whom they are not married." **26** **Paul agreed to do what James and the other leaders asked him to do.** The next day he took the four men and together they did the ceremonies that were necessary for them to worship in the temple. After that, Paul went to the temple courts and told the priests that these men had done everything

they had promised God they would do. He told the priests that they just needed to offer the sacrifices that the law required. Paul kept going to the temple courts with the men until each one of them had offered the necessary sacrifices.

27 Now it took seven days for the ceremonies that allowed the men to return to their regular lives after their vows. Near the end of that time, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple courtyard. They were very upset with him, and they made many other Jews who were there upset with Paul as well. The Jews from Asia grabbed on to Paul. **28** They shouted, "Fellow Israelites, come and help us to punish this man! This is the one who is teaching people wherever he goes that the Jewish people are not special. He teaches people that they should no longer obey the laws of Moses and that they do not need to respect this temple. He has even brought non-Jews here into the court of our temple, causing this holy place to become polluted!" **29** They said these things because they had seen Paul walking around in Jerusalem with Trophimus. He was a non-Jew from Ephesus. **The Jews did not permit non-Jews to be in certain parts of the temple courtyard.** These Jews from the province of Asia thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple courtyard that day. **30** People all over the city heard that there was trouble at the temple courtyard and they came running there. The crowd seized Paul and dragged him outside of the temple area. The temple guards quickly shut the gates to the temple courtyard so that the people could not do anything violent inside the temple area.

31 While they were trying to kill Paul, someone ran to the fortress near the temple and told the Roman commander that many people in Jerusalem were rioting at the temple. **32** The commander quickly gathered some officers and a large group of soldiers. They ran down the fortress steps to the temple area where the crowd was. When the crowd of people who were yelling at Paul and beating him saw the commander and the soldiers coming, they stopped beating him.

33 Then the commander came to where Paul was and took hold of him. He commanded soldiers to fasten a chain to each of Paul's arms. Then he asked the people in the crowd, "Who is this man, and what has he done?" **34** But some of the many people there were shouting one thing and some were shouting something else. And because the situation was so confused, the commander could not find out who Paul was. So he commanded that Paul be taken into the fortress that was connected with the temple court so that he could question him there. **35** The

soldiers led Paul to the steps of the fortress. But many people followed them, still trying to kill Paul. So the commander told the soldiers to carry Paul up the steps into the fortress. **36** The commander knew that Paul was in danger because the crowd that was following the soldiers kept shouting, “Kill him! Kill him!”

37 And as the soldiers were about to bring Paul into the fortress, he said **in Greek** to the commander, “May I speak with you?” And the commander said, “I am surprised that you can speak Greek! **38** That must mean that you are that man from Egypt who rebelled against the Roman government not long ago. He took 4,000 violent men with him out into the desert **so that we could not catch him**.” **39** Paul said in reply, “I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, which is an important city in the province of Cilicia. I request that you let me speak to the people.” **40** Then the commander permitted Paul to speak. So Paul stood on the steps that led up to the fortress. He motioned with his hand for the crowd to be quiet. And after the people in the crowd became very quiet, Paul spoke to them in their own Hebrew language.

22 **1** Paul said, “Jewish elders and my fellow Jews, please listen to me now while I answer your accusations.” **2** When the crowd of people heard Paul speaking to them in their own Hebrew language, they became even quieter and listened. Then Paul said to them, **3** “I am a Jew, as are all of you. I come from the city of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. When I was young, I learned the laws that Moses gave to our ancestors. Gamaliel was my teacher, and he taught me very accurately. I have obeyed those laws because I have wanted to obey God. I am sure that all of you here also obey those laws. **4** That is why I tried to arrest those who believed the message of God about Jesus. I even looked for ways to kill them. Whenever I found men or women who believed the message, I arrested them and had the authorities put them in jail. **5** The high priest knows this, and so do the other men who belong to our Jewish council. They gave me letters to take to their fellow Jews in the city of Damascus. Those letters gave me the power to go there and arrest people in that city **who believed in Jesus**. I could then take them as prisoners to Jerusalem so that the Jewish authorities could punish them.

6 So I went to Damascus. About noon, as I got near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from the sky flashed all around me. **7** **The light was so bright that** I fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me **from up in the sky**. It said, ‘Saul! Saul! Stop doing

things to hurt me!' [8] And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are hurting.' [9] Now the men who were traveling with me saw the bright light, but they did not understand what the voice was saying to me. [10] Then I asked, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus. A man there will tell you all that I have planned for you to do.' [11] After that, I could not see, because that bright light had caused me to become blind. So the men who were with me took me by the hand and led me to Damascus. [12] Then a man whose name was Ananias came to see me. He was a man who honored God and obeyed the Jewish laws. The Jews living in Damascus said very good things about him. [13] He came and stood beside me. He said to me, 'Saul, my friend, see again!' Instantly I could see and I saw him standing beside me. [14] Then he said: 'The God whom we worship and whom our ancestors worshiped has chosen you for a special purpose. He will show you what he wants you to do. He has allowed you to see Jesus the Messiah, **gloriously alive again**. You have heard him speak to you himself. [15] He wants you to tell people everywhere what you have seen and heard from him. [16] So please do not delay! Let me baptize you right now. Pray to the Lord Jesus and ask God to forgive you for your sins!'"

[17] "Then later I returned to Jerusalem. One day I went to the temple courtyard and while I was praying there, I saw a vision. [18] In my vision I saw Jesus as he said to me, 'Leave Jerusalem quickly, because the people here will not believe what you tell them about me!' [19] But I said to him, 'Lord, they know that I went from one synagogue to another looking for people who believed in you. I was putting them in jail, and I was even beating them. [20] They remember that when people killed Stephen because he said you were the Messiah, I stood there watching and approving of what they were doing. I even guarded the outer clothes that those who were murdering him had thrown aside!' [21] But Jesus said to me, 'Leave Jerusalem, because I am going to send you far away from here to tell non-Jews about me!'"

[22] The people listened to what Paul was saying until he talked about Jesus sending him to non-Jews. Then they began shouting, "Kill him! A man like him does not deserve to live any longer!" [23] And while they were shouting, they took off their robes and threw dirt into the air. [24] So the commander told his soldiers to take Paul into the fortress. He told them to whip Paul to make him admit what he had done that had made the Jews so angry with him. [25] Then they stretched his arms out and tied them so that they could whip him on his back. But Paul said to

the officer near him, “You will be acting unlawfully if you whip me. I am a Roman citizen, and no one has declared me guilty of anything!” **26** When the officer heard that, he went to the commander and reported it to him. He said to the commander, “This man is a Roman citizen! Surely you would not command us to whip him!” **27** **The commander was surprised when he heard that.** He went into the prison and said to Paul, “Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?” Paul answered, “Yes, I am.” **28** Then the commander said, “I too am a Roman citizen. I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen.” But Paul said, “I have been a Roman citizen for my whole life.” **29** The soldiers were about to whip Paul and to ask him questions about what he had done. But when they heard what Paul said, they immediately backed away from him. The commander also became afraid. He knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had broken the law when he commanded the soldiers to tie up Paul’s hands.

30 The commander still wanted to know for sure why the Jews were accusing Paul. So the next day he told the soldiers to take the chains off Paul. He also called the chief priests and the other council members to meet. Then he brought Paul down the stairway to the temple courts. He took him to where the council was meeting and told him to stand in front of them.

23 **1** So Paul looked at the Jewish council members and said, “My fellow Jews, throughout my life I have lived respecting our God. I do not know of anything that I have done that I knew was wrong.” **2** When Ananias the high priest heard what Paul said, he told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. **3** Then Paul said to Ananias, “God will punish you for that, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me, using the laws that God gave Moses. But you yourself disobey those laws! You commanded those men to strike me without proving that I have done anything wrong!” **4** But the men who were standing near Paul said to him, “You should not speak badly to God’s high priest!” **5** Paul replied, “My fellow Jews, **I am sorry that I said that.** I did not know that the man who told one of you to hit me was the high priest. **If I had known that, I would not have talked badly about him.** I know that we can read in the Law of Moses, ‘Do not speak badly about any of your leaders.’”

6 Now Paul knew that some of the council members were Sadducees and others were Pharisees. So he called out in the council hall, “My fellow Jews, I am a Pharisee. My ancestors have been Pharisees as well. You have put me on trial here because I am sure that one day God will cause those who have died to live again.” **7** And when he said that, the Pharisees and

Sadducees started to argue with one another about whether people who have died will become alive again. The two groups strongly disagreed with each other. **8** They disagreed so strongly because Sadducees do not believe that after people die, they will become alive again. They also do not believe that there are angels or other kinds of spirits. But Pharisees do believe those things. **9** Then both groups started shouting at one another as they argued. Some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up. One of them insisted, "We think that this man has done nothing wrong. We believe that an angel or some other spirit spoke to him. So we must all agree that he is innocent!" **10** Then the Pharisees and Sadducees became very violent with one another. The commander became concerned that they would hurt Paul badly. So he told soldiers to come down from the fortress into the temple courtyard. He told them to take Paul away from the council members and bring him up into the barracks.

11 That night, Paul saw Jesus come and stand near him. Jesus said to him, "Be brave! You have told people here in Jerusalem about me. I will protect you so that you can tell people in Rome about me too."

12 The next morning some of the Jews who hated Paul met and talked about how to kill him. To make sure that they killed him, they all promised that they would not eat or drink anything before they had killed Paul. They asked God to kill them if they did not do what they promised. **13** Now there were more than 40 men who agreed to kill Paul. **14** They went to the chief priests and Jewish elders and told them, "God has heard us promise that we will not eat or drink anything before we have killed Paul. **15** So to help us, we request that you go to the commander and ask him, on behalf of the whole Jewish council, to bring Paul down from the fortress to meet with you again. Tell the commander that you want to talk to Paul some more. We will be waiting to kill Paul while he is on the way here."

16 But the son of Paul's sister heard what they were planning to do, so he went into the fortress and told Paul. **17** When Paul heard about the plan to kill him, he called one of the officers and said to him, "Please take this young man to the commander. He needs to tell him something." **18** So the officer took Paul's nephew to the commander. The officer told the commander, "Paul, whom we are guarding here, asked to speak with me. He said, 'Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something important.'" **19** So the commander took Paul's nephew by the hand and led him off by himself. Then he asked him, "What do you have to tell me?" **20** Then Paul's nephew replied, "There are some Jews

who are going to ask you tomorrow to bring Paul down from the fortress to meet with their council again. They will say that they want to ask him some more questions. **But that is not true.** **21** So do not do what they ask you to do. There are actually more than 40 Jewish men who will be hiding and waiting to kill Paul when he passes by on his way to the council. They have even promised God that they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are ready to do it. They are just waiting for you to agree to do what they are asking."
22 The commander warned Paul's nephew, "Do not tell anyone that you have told me about their plan." Then he sent him away.

23 Then the commander called two of his officers and told them, "Get a group of 200 soldiers ready to travel. Take along 70 soldiers riding horses and 200 other soldiers carrying spears. All of you must be ready to leave at nine o'clock tonight and go to the city of Caesarea.
24 Take along horses for Paul to ride, and escort him to the palace of Governor Felix."
25 Then the commander wrote a letter to send to the governor. This is what he wrote: **26** "Your Excellency, Governor Felix, this is Claudius Lysias writing to you. I send you my greetings.
27 I am sending you a man whose name is Paul. Certain Jews had seized him and were about to kill him. But I learned that he was a Roman citizen, so I and my soldiers went and rescued him. **28** I wanted to know what those Jews were saying that he had done wrong, so I took him to their Jewish council. **29** I listened while they asked this man questions and he answered them. The accusations they made against him had to do with their Jewish laws. But Paul has not disobeyed any of our Roman laws. So our officials should not execute him or even put him in prison. **30** Then someone told me that some Jews were planning to kill this man. So I sent him to you right away so that you could give him a fair trial there. I have also commanded the Jews who have accused him to go there to Caesarea and tell you why they are accusing him. Goodbye."

31 So the soldiers did what the commander told them. They got Paul and took him with them during the night to the city of Antipatris. **32** The next day, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem and the soldiers who rode horses continued traveling to Caesarea with Paul.
33 When the soldiers who rode horses arrived in the city of Caesarea, they gave the letter to the governor and they brought Paul to him. **34** So the governor read the letter. Then he asked Paul, "What province are you from?" Paul answered, "I am from Cilicia." **35** Then the governor said, "When the people who have accused you arrive, I will listen to what each of

you says and then I will judge your case." Then he commanded his soldiers to guard Paul in the palace that King Herod the Great had built.

24 **1** Then, five days after the Roman soldiers brought Paul to Caesarea, the Jewish high priest Ananias traveled there from Jerusalem. He brought some other Jewish elders with him. They also brought a man who spoke well and knew the Roman laws well. His name was Tertullus. The Jewish leaders wanted him to persuade the governor that he should punish Paul. **2** So the governor commanded his soldiers to bring Paul in. When Paul arrived, Tertullus started arguing that Felix should punish him. He said to the governor, "During the time that you have ruled us, we have lived well. By planning wisely, you have made many things better for our Jewish people. **3** Therefore, Honorable Governor Felix, we continually thank you for everything that you have done for us, wherever you have done those things. **4** But so that I do not use too much of your time, I will speak briefly. Please listen to what I have to say. I know you will make the right decision about this case. **5** Now we can assure you that this man causes trouble wherever he goes. He encourages all the Jews to rebel against you Romans. He leads a radical group within Judaism. The members of that group call themselves the Nazarenes. **6** He even tried to make our temple in Jerusalem no longer holy. And that is why we arrested him.[14] [And we wanted to judge him according to our law. **7** [15] But Lysias, the commander of the Roman fortress, came with his soldiers and took him away from us, **8** [16] sending us to you.] If you question him yourself about all these matters, you will be able to learn that everything I am saying about him is true." **9** Then the Jewish leaders who had come to Caesarea accused Paul too. They insisted that what Tertullus said about him was true.

10 Then the governor signaled with his hand that he wanted Paul to speak. So Paul spoke to defend himself. He said, "Governor Felix, I know that you have governed this Jewish province for many years. Therefore I am eager to defend myself to you **because I know that you will listen to me and will judge me fairly**. **11** You can easily confirm that I went to Jerusalem to worship God just 12 days ago. **12** No one can say truthfully that they saw me arguing with anyone in the temple courts, because I did not do that. No one can say truthfully that they saw me causing people to riot in any Jewish synagogue or causing trouble anywhere else in Jerusalem, because I did not do that. **13** So they cannot prove to you the things of which they are now accusing me. **14** But I admit to you that this is true: I live as Jesus taught us to live.

They claim that makes me different from other Jews, but that is how I obey the God whom our Jewish ancestors worshiped. I also believe everything that Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him and everything that the prophets wrote in their books. **15** I believe, just as these men also believe, that some day God will cause everyone who has died to live again. God will do this both for those who were good and for those who were wicked. **16** Because I believe that day will come, I always try to do what pleases God and what other people think is right. **17** Let me tell you why I was in Jerusalem. After I had been in other places for several years, I returned there to bring some money to help my fellow Jews who were poor. While I was there, I also offered sacrifices in the temple courtyard. **18** Some Jews from Asia saw me offering those sacrifices in the temple courtyard. I had completed the ritual that allowed me to worship God there. There was no crowd with me. I was not causing anyone to riot. **19** No, it was those Jews from the province of Asia who caused the people to riot! And they should really be here in your court to accuse me if they think that I have done anything wrong. **20** But if they do not want to do that, these Jewish men who are here should tell you what they think I did that was wrong when I defended myself in their council. **21** They might say that I did this one thing wrong: When I was in their council, I shouted, 'You are judging me today because I believe that God will cause all the people who have died to live again.'"

22 Now Felix already knew much about the group people called the Way, and so he stopped the trial. He said to the Jewish leaders, "Later, when Commander Lysias comes here, I will decide this case." **23** Then Governor Felix told the officer who was guarding Paul to take Paul back to the prison. But he told him to allow Paul to do things freely in the prison. He also said that if Paul's friends came to visit him, the officer should allow them to help Paul in any way that they wanted to.

24 But several days later Felix came back with his wife Drusilla. She was a Jew. Felix called for Paul to speak with him. He **and Drusilla** listened to what Paul said about trusting in Jesus the Messiah. **25** Paul talked about what God wants people to do in order to please him. Paul also explained how people should control how they act. Paul said that there would be a time when God would judge all people. Felix became afraid after hearing those things. So he said to Paul, "That is all I want to hear now. But when I have time, I will ask you to come to me again." **26** Felix was also hoping that Paul would give him some money. So he sent for

Paul to come to him many times. Paul talked with Felix every time, **but he did not give him any money, so Felix did not tell his soldiers to release Paul from prison**.

27 This went on for about two years. Then a man named Porcius Festus replaced Felix as the governor. And since Felix wanted to please the Jewish leaders, he left Paul in prison.

25 **1** Then Festus began to rule as the governor of the province of Judea. Three days later, he left the city of Caesarea and traveled to Jerusalem. **2** In Jerusalem, the chief priests and some important Jewish leaders insisted urgently to Festus that Paul had done things that were very wrong. **3** They asked Festus to help them pursue their case against Paul. They asked him to order his soldiers to bring Paul to trial in Jerusalem. But they were really planning to attack him on the road and kill him. **4** But Festus replied, "Paul is in prison in Caesarea. Now I myself plan to travel back to Caesarea very soon." **5** "So," he said, "those of you who are able should travel there with me. If you want to accuse Paul of doing anything wrong, you can accuse him there."

6 Festus remained in Jerusalem with the Jewish leaders for about another week. Then he returned to the city of Caesarea. The next day, Festus commanded his soldiers to bring Paul to the hall where he was sitting in the judge's seat. **7** So the soldiers brought Paul to Festus. The Jewish leaders who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him. They accused him of doing many bad things. But they were not able to prove any of them. **8** Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, "I have not broken any of the Jewish laws. I have not broken any of the rules about who can enter the temple. I have not broken any of the Roman laws." **9** Festus, however, wanted to please the Jewish leaders. So he asked Paul, "Are you willing to travel to Jerusalem so that I can judge your case there?" **10** But Paul replied, "No, right now you are judging me, and you represent the Emperor. This is the right place for my trial. I have done nothing wrong to the Jewish people. You know that is the truth. **11** If I deserved to die for something I had done wrong, I would accept dying as my punishment. They are accusing me of many things, but I do not deserve to die for anything I have done. So no one can condemn me just to satisfy them. I claim my right to have Caesar himself judge me." **12** Festus conferred with the officials who advised him. Then he told Paul, "You have asked Caesar to try your case, and so I will send you to Caesar."

13 Then, after several days, King Herod Agrippa arrived at Caesarea. His sister Bernice
came with him. They were making a formal visit to welcome Festus as the new governor.
14 Since King Agrippa and Bernice stayed in Caesarea for several days, they had time to speak
with Festus about many things. At one point Festus told Agrippa about Paul. He said, "There is
a man here whom Felix kept in prison. **15** When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the
Jewish elders accused him of many things. They asked me to condemn him to death. **16** But I
told them that when people accuse someone of a serious crime, we Romans do not condemn
that person just to satisfy the accusers. Instead, we allow him to meet in person with his
accusers and defend himself against what they say about him. **17** So when those Jews came
here to Caesarea, I did not delay the trial at all. The day after they arrived, I convened the court
and ordered the guards to bring in the prisoner. **18** I thought that the Jewish leaders would
accuse Paul of doing many wrong things. But when they made their accusations against him,
none of the accusations were serious. **19** Instead, they argued with him about what Jews should
believe. They also argued about a man whose name was Jesus. He had died, but Paul said he
was alive. **20** I did not know how I could investigate this case from Caesarea. So I asked Paul,
'Are you willing to go to Jerusalem so that I can judge you there about these things?' **21** But
Paul asked to stay in Caesarea until the emperor himself could judge his case. So I ordered my
soldiers to keep him under guard until I could send him to Caesar." **22** Then Agrippa said to
Festus, "Personally I would like to hear what this man has to say." Festus answered, "I will
arrange for you to hear him tomorrow."

23 So the next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall of judgment. The people there
showed them much honor. Some Roman commanders and some of the important people of
Caesarea came with them. Then Festus commanded the guards to bring Paul in. **24** After Paul
entered, Festus said, "King Agrippa and all the rest of you who are here with us, you see this
man! Many leaders of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and here, have protested to me about him.
They have demanded that I put him to death immediately. **25** But I found that he had done
nothing to deserve being killed. Even so, he has asked Caesar to judge his case. So I have
decided to send him to Rome. **26** But I do not know exactly what to write to the emperor about
him. That is why I have brought him here to speak to all of you, and especially to you, King
Agrippa. You can question him. Then I will know what to write to the emperor. **27** After all, it

makes sense that when I send a prisoner to the emperor in Rome, I should say exactly what wrong things people say he has done."

26 **1** Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may now speak on your own behalf." Then Paul held out his hand to show that he was about to speak. He defended himself by saying, **2** "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that I can explain myself to you today. I will tell you why the Jewish leaders are wrong when they say that I have done bad things. **3** I am especially fortunate because you know so much about the customs of us Jews and the questions that we argue about. So please listen to me as I tell my whole story.

4 My fellow Jews know how I have lived my life since the time I was a child. They know that I have always lived among Jews and that I received my education in Jerusalem. **5** They have known me since I was young. They could tell you, if they were willing, that as a Pharisee, I obeyed the most rigid customs of our religion very carefully. **6** Today I am on trial because I am confidently expecting that God will do what he promised to our ancestors. **7** Our 12 Jewish tribes are also waiting confidently for God to do what he promised. That is why they continue to honor him and worship him so diligently. And yet, Honored King, these Jewish leaders are saying that I have done wrong because I too am waiting confidently. **8** None of you should find it hard to believe that God would cause people who had died to live again.

9 But I will admit that I too once found it hard to believe. I was sure that I should do everything that I could to stop people from believing in Jesus from the town of Nazareth. **10** So that is what I did when I lived in Jerusalem. I put many of the believers in prison. The chief priests there had given me the power to do that. And when the Sanhedrin was deciding whether to kill believers, I voted in favor of that. **11** I continually punished believers in Jesus in every synagogue where I could find them. I tried to force them to say that they did not believe in Jesus. I was so angry with them that I even went to foreign cities to find them.

12 Because I told them I wanted to arrest believers in Damascus, the chief priests gave me the power to do that. So I traveled to Damascus. **13** While I was on my way there, O King, I saw a bright light in the sky. Even though it was around noon, this light was even brighter than the sun! It shone all around me and also around those who were traveling with me. **14** We all fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me in the Hebrew language.

He said, ‘Saul, Saul, you should not be fighting against me. You are harming yourself, like an animal that is kicking against a sharp prod.’ **15** Then I said, ‘Please tell me who you are.’ And the person who was speaking to me said, ‘I am Jesus! I am the one you are fighting against. **16** But get up off the ground now. I have appeared to you in order to make you my servant. I want you to tell other people who I am, now that you have seen me. I will show you more about myself later, and I want you to tell others about that too. **17** I am sending you both to Jewish people and to non-Jewish people. I will protect you from them. **18** I want you to help them recognize who I really am. I want you to help them to live in a way that pleases God. I want them to know that God can make them free from the devil’s influence. I want them to know that God will forgive their sins. I want them to receive the good things that people whom God saves because they believe in me will have forever.’

19 So, King Agrippa, I did what God told me to do when he gave me that vision. **20** First, I spoke to the Jews in Damascus. Then I spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem and in the countryside of Judea. I also spoke to the non-Jews there. I told them that they should stop sinning and ask God to help them live in the right way. I told them they should do things that showed they had stopped sinning.

21 It is because I preached this message that some Jews seized me when I was in the temple courtyard and tried to kill me. **22** Because God has been helping me, I have been able to keep proclaiming these things to this very day. I have continued to tell people, regardless of their status, exactly what the prophets and Moses said would happen. **23** They said that the Messiah would suffer and die. They said that he would be the first person to live again after he had died. They also said that he would tell people how God was able to save them. He would tell this, both to his own Jewish people and to non-Jewish people.”

24 Before Paul could say anything further to defend himself, Festus shouted out loudly, “Paul, you are crazy! You have studied too much, and that has made you crazy!” **25** But Paul answered, “Your Excellency, Governor Festus, I am not insane! On the contrary, what I am saying is true and quite sane! **26** I can assure you that I am not crazy, because King Agrippa is familiar with the things I have been talking about so enthusiastically to him. I am very sure that he is aware of all of these things. They all happened very publicly. **27** King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know that you believe those things.” **28** Then Agrippa

answered Paul, “I would need to hear much more than this to decide to become a Christian!”
29 Paul replied, “Perhaps you need to hear more, or perhaps you could decide now. But either
way, I pray to God that you and all of the others who are listening to me today will become like
me, except for these chains!” 30 Then King Agrippa stood up. The governor, Bernice, and all
the other important people who had come in with them also got up 31 and left the room. After
they left, they said to each other, “We should not execute this man or keep him in prison. He
has done nothing to deserve that.” 32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “If this man had not
appealed to Caesar, you could have released him.”

27 1 Soon the governor decided it was time to send Paul by ship to Italy. **I, Luke, traveled
with him.** He put Paul and some other prisoners under the control of a military officer whose
name was Julius. This man was part of a group of soldiers who reported directly to the
emperor. 2 So Julius put us aboard a ship from the city of Adramyttium in the province of
Asia. This ship was about to sail to various places along the coast of Asia. In this way we
began our journey by sea. Aristarchus, a man from the city of Thessalonica in the province of
Macedonia, went with us. 3 The next day we arrived at the city of Sidon. There Julius treated
Paul generously. He gave him permission to go see his friends in Sidon so they could help him
with whatever he needed. 4 Then the ship sailed away from Sidon. We went along the coast of
Cyprus, which was sheltered from the wind, because the wind was against us. 5 After that, we
crossed over the sea close to the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia. The ship arrived at the city of
Myra in the province of Lycia. We got off the ship there. 6 In Myra, Julius found a ship that
had come from the city of Alexandria. It would soon sail to Italy. So he arranged for us to go
aboard that ship and we left. 7 **The winds were still against us, so** we sailed slowly for many
days. It was difficult, but we finally reached the city of Cnidus. From there the wind was so
strong that the ship could not sail straight westward. So we sailed along the coast of the island
of Crete instead**, where the wind was not blowing strongly.** We sailed past Cape Salmone, an area
of land sticking out into the water. 8 The wind was still strong, and it prevented the ship from
moving ahead fast. So we moved slowly along the coast of Crete. We eventually arrived at a
port whose name was Fair Havens. It was near the city of Lasea.

9 **Because the wind was blowing from the west,** the journey from Caesarea to Fair Havens
had taken much more time than the captain and centurion had planned. It had become

dangerous to sail because it was late in the year and the stormy season was approaching. So Paul said to the men on the ship, **10** and said to them, “Friends, God has shown me that if we continue sailing, we will suffer harm and lose many things. A great storm will destroy the ship and its cargo and kill all of us.” **11** But the Roman officer did not believe what Paul said. Instead, he believed the pilot and the captain when they told him the ship would be safe.
12 The harbor of Fair Havens did not protect the ships in it very well from winter storms. So most of the sailors recommended leaving Fair Havens. They hoped that they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a city on the island of Crete with a good harbor. The harbor protects ships well from winds that blow from the southwest and northwest.
13 Because only a gentle wind was blowing from the south, the ship’s crew thought that they could reach Phoenix safely. So they lifted the ship’s anchor up out of the sea and sailed the ship close to the coastline of the island of Crete. **14** After a little while, however, a stormy wind blew down from the island. It was the kind of wind that the sailors called the Northeast Wind.
15 This stormy wind blew so strongly against the front of the ship that we could not sail into it. So the sailors decided to sail in the direction that the wind was blowing. It pushed us across the sea very quickly. **16** However, the sailors were able to sail the ship on the side of a small island that was sheltered from the wind. The name of the island was Cauda. It was very difficult, but the sailors were finally able to gain control of the lifeboat. **17** The sailors hoisted the lifeboat up onto the ship. Then they wound its ropes around the hull of the ship. They became concerned that they would get stuck in the soggy sand at Syrtis. So they took down the sails **to go more slowly**. This meant they could not steer the ship, and it went wherever the wind blew it.
18 But the wind and the waves continued to toss the ship about roughly. So on the next day, the sailors began to throw overboard the things that the ship was carrying. **19** Then, on the third day of the storm, the sailors threw overboard most of the ship’s sails, ropes, and poles. They did this deliberately **in order to make the ship lighter**. **20** But the wind continued to blow very strongly against the ship. The sky was always full of dark clouds so that the sailors could not see the sun or the stars to navigate. After all this we lost hope that we would even survive.

21 None of us on the ship had eaten for many days. Then one day, Paul stood up in front of us and said, “Friends, you should have listened to me when I said that we should not set sail from Crete. Then, we would not have suffered all this damage. **22** But now please do not be afraid, because none of us will die. The storm will destroy the ship but it will not destroy us.

23 I know this because last night an angel came and stood by me. The God who protects me and who told me to tell others about him sent this angel. **24** The angel said to me, ‘Paul, do not be afraid. You will reach Rome safely and have the opportunity to testify to the emperor. I want you to know that God is being kind to you. He will make sure that everyone who is traveling with you will also survive.’ **25** So cheer up, my friends, because I believe that God will make this happen exactly as the angel told me. **26** However, the ship will crash on some island, and we will go ashore there.”

27 Now on the fourteenth night after the storm began, the storm was still blowing the ship across the open sea. At about midnight, the sailors thought that the ship was getting close to land. **28** So the sailors lowered a rope with a weight on the end to measure how deep the water was. When they pulled the rope up again, they measured it and saw that the water was 40 meters deep. A little later, they measured again and found that the water was 30 meters deep. **29** **Because the water was getting shallower,** the sailors were afraid that the ship might crash onto some rocks. So they threw four anchors into the water from the end of the ship. Then they prayed that it would soon become light **so that they could see where the ship was going**. **30** Some of the sailors were planning to escape from the ship. They did not want anyone to know what they planned to do. So they pretended that they needed to put the lifeboat in the water so they could use it to lower some anchors from the ship’s front. **31** But Paul said to the Roman officer and the soldiers, “If the sailors do not stay in the ship, you will not survive.” **32** So the soldiers cut the ropes and the lifeboat dropped into the sea.

33 Just before dawn, Paul encouraged everyone on the ship to eat something. He said, “For the past 14 days you have been waiting and watching and not eating anything. **34** So now I urge you to eat some food, because you must do this to live. The storm will not kill any of you**, but if you do not eat, you will die**.” **35** Then after Paul said that, while everyone was watching, he took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread into pieces and began to eat some of it. **36** Then they all cheered up and ate some food. **37** Altogether there were 276 of us on the ship. **38** When everyone had eaten enough, the sailors made the ship lighter by throwing the rest of the wheat into the water.

39 At dawn we could see land, but the sailors did not know what it was. However, they could see a bay that had a beach. They decided to try to run the ship up onto this wide area of

sand at the water's edge. **40** So they cut the ropes that attached the anchors to the ship and let the anchors fall loose into the water. They also untied the ropes that held the rudders to the ship. They raised a sail to the top of the mast so that the wind would blow into it. Then they steered the ship toward the shore. **41** But the ship sailed into turbulent waters and ran onto a sandbank that was just under the waves. The front of the ship stuck there and could not move. Big waves beat against the back of the ship and it began to break apart.

42 The soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape. **43** But the Roman officer wanted to save Paul. So he stopped the soldiers from killing the prisoners. Instead, he commanded everyone who could swim to jump off the ship first into the water and swim to shore. **44** Then he told the ones who could not swim to hold onto something that would float and drift toward the shore. Some held onto wooden boards that the waves had broken loose from the ship. Some held onto articles from the ship that would float. We did what he said, and in that way all of us made it safely to the shore.

28 **1** After we had arrived safely on the shore, we learned that we were on an island whose name was Malta. **2** The people who lived there took care of us very generously. It was cold and it was starting to rain. So they lit a fire and invited all of us to come and warm ourselves. **3** Now Paul **was helping by** collecting a bundle of pieces of wood to burn. When he put them on the fire, a poisonous snake came out from the bundle to escape from the heat of the fire. It bit Paul on his hand and clung to it. **4** Now the people from the island saw the snake dangling from Paul's hand. They said to each other, "This man has probably murdered someone. He has escaped from drowning in the sea. But the goddess Justice is punishing him anyway. He will die from this snake bite." **5** But Paul shook his hand hard so that the snake would fall off his hand and back into the fire. The snake fell off and Paul was not hurt at all. **6** Still, some of the people of the island expected that Paul's body would soon swell up because of the snake bite. Others thought he would suddenly fall down and die. But they waited a long time and did not see either of those things happen to him. So the people decided they had been wrong about who Paul was. They said to one another, "This man is not a murderer. He must be a god**, because that snake bite would have killed any human being**!"

7 Now the people of the island had built the fire near some fields that belonged to a man whose name was Publius. He was the chief official on the island. He invited us to come and

stay in his home. He took very good care of us for three days. **8** At that time Publius' father had fever and a stomach illness. He was lying sick in bed. So Paul visited him and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands on him and healed him. **9** After Paul healed Publius' father, the rest of the people on the island who were sick came to him and he healed them too. **10** The island people also brought us gifts and showed in other ways that they greatly respected us. Later on, when we were ready to leave, they brought us food and other things that we would need on the ship.

11 We stayed on Malta for a total of three months. Then we left on a ship that had spent the winter there. The ship was from Alexandria and was going to Italy. On the front of the ship there were carved images of the twin gods whose names were Castor and Pollux. **12** When we arrived at the city of Syracuse, we stayed there three days. **13** Then we sailed away from Syracuse and arrived at the city of Rhegium in Italy. The next day, the wind began to blow from the south. So in only two more days, we reached the town of Puteoli. **There we got off the ship and went the rest of the way to Rome by land.** **14** In Puteoli we met some fellow believers who asked us to stay with them for seven days. After that, we continued on to Rome.

15 Some fellow believers in Rome had heard that we were coming and they came to meet us. Some of them met us at the place on the Appian Road whose name was the Market. Others met us at the place whose name was the Three Inns. When Paul saw those believers, he thanked God and felt brave. **16** After we arrived in Rome, the authorities there permitted Paul to live in a home rather than in prison. But a soldier was always there to guard him.

17 Now after Paul had been in Rome for three days, he sent a message to the Jewish leaders to come and talk with him. And when they arrived, Paul said to them, "My dear kinsmen, I have not opposed our people or spoken against the customs of our ancestors. **But some Jews in Jerusalem seized me and tried to kill me. A Roman commander rescued me and later** sent me as a prisoner to the city of Caesarea so that the Roman authorities could put me on trial. **18** The Roman authorities questioned me and wanted to release me because I had not done any bad thing for which I should be executed. **19** But the Jewish leaders argued that the Romans should not set me free, So I had to request that the emperor judge me here in Rome. But I did not do that because I wanted to accuse our leaders of doing anything wrong. **20** So I asked you to come here so that I could tell you why I am a prisoner. It is because I believe in

what we Jews confidently expect that God will do for us." **21** Then the Jewish leaders replied, "We have not received any letters from our fellow Jews in Judea about you. And none of our fellow Jews who have come here from Judea have said anything bad about you. **22** But we would appreciate you telling us what you think about this group that you belong to. Please tell us, because we are aware that in many places people are speaking against it."

23 So they decided that they would come back on another day. On that day, even more people than before came to where Paul was staying to hear Paul speak. Paul explained many things to them. He talked about how God would rule everyone. He also talked about how various places in the Scriptures foretold that Jesus would come. Paul talked for that entire day with the people who had come to his house. **24** Paul was able to persuade some of those Jews that the things he said about Jesus were true. But some others would not believe that they were true. **25** The two groups argued with each other. When they were about to leave, Paul told them one more thing. He said, "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said something through Isaiah the prophet.

26 He said, 'Go to the people of Israel and say to them:
"You seem to be listening but you never really understand what God is saying.
You seem to be looking but you never really recognize the things that God is
27 doing." These people do not understand because they have become stubborn.
It is as if they have become deaf.
It is as if they have closed their eyes.
It is as if they have done this because they do not want to see well,
and they do not want to hear well,
and they do not want to understand well.
If they did pay attention to me and understand what I am telling them, they would stop sinning and live in the right way again.
If they did that, I would restore them.'

28 Therefore, you should know that God is offering to save the non-Jews, and many of them will accept his offer." **29** 17 [When he had said these things, the Jews went away. They were having a great dispute among themselves.]

30 After that, Paul stayed in Rome for two whole years in a house that he rented. Many people came to see him. He received each of them gladly and spoke with them. **31** He preached about how God would rule over everyone. He also taught people about the Lord Jesus the Messiah. He spoke about these things very openly. No one tried to stop him.

Romans

1 **1** I, Paul, am writing this letter. I serve the Messiah Jesus. He called me to represent him and specially chose me to proclaim God's good news. **2** God previously promised this good news by means of his spokesmen who prophesied about it and wrote it down in the sacred writings. **3** This good news is about God's Son. He was born a natural descendant of David. **4** In accordance with the Holy Spirit, God powerfully demonstrated that Jesus is his Son by causing him to live again after he had died. God's Son is Jesus the Messiah, who is our Lord. **5** Jesus favored us who represent him and authorized us to represent him on his behalf in order that all the nations would obey God by trusting in Jesus the Messiah. **6** Jesus the Messiah has also called you who are living among the nations. **7** I am writing this letter to all of you believers who dwell in the city of Rome. God loves you and has called you to be people who belong to him. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

8 Now, the first thing I want to tell you, is that I am constantly thanking my God through Jesus the Messiah for all of you believers in the Messiah. I thank him because people throughout the known world are proclaiming how you trust in Jesus. **9** I can say this truthfully because God testifies for me that I frequently pray for you. I serve him devotedly by proclaiming the good news about his Son, Jesus. **10** When I pray, I very often request that I might finally succeed in coming to visit you because God wants me to. **11** I pray for this because I deeply desire to see you in person in order to share some kind of gracious gift with you from the Holy Spirit in order to help you become spiritually stronger. **12** In other words, I want to share some gracious gift with you in order that we may mutually encourage one other. Both you and I can help each other by sharing how we mutually trust in God. **13** My fellow believers, I certainly want you to know that I planned to visit you many times. But God has prevented me from visiting you until the present time. I planned to visit you in order to lead some people to believe in Christ among you as well, just like how I have also done so among the other nations. **14** I am obligated to proclaim the good news to all non-Jewish people, whether or not they are culturally Greek and

whether or not they are educated. 15 So then, if it were my choice, I would gladly proclaim the good news to you who dwell in Rome.

16 I would gladly do this because I am deeply honored to proclaim the good news because it is the powerful way that God uses to save anyone who believes it. This is true for both the Jews who first heard the good news and then everyone else. 17 This is true because whenever people proclaim the good news, they reveal how God makes people righteous, which is entirely through trusting in the Messiah. This is what the prophet Habakkuk meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, "But the person whom God makes righteous will live forever by trusting in God."

18 This is true because from where God dwells he is revealing how he is furious toward and will judge every person who does ungodly and unrighteous things. These people suppress the things that God says are true by living in an unrighteous manner.

19 God will judge them because what anyone can know about God is obvious to these people since God has made it obvious to them. 20 This is true because people can clearly perceive those things about God that they cannot see with their eyes. These things are how powerful God is and the fact that he is God. People could perceive these things since the time God created the universe. The things that God has made have understood these things. For this reason, people cannot excuse themselves from acknowledging that God exists. 21 People cannot excuse themselves because they do not honor him as God, even though they know that he exists. They also refuse to thank him. In contrast, they think about worthless things, and they are unable to understand spiritual things. 22 Although they assert that they are wise, they are actually fools. 23 They stop glorifying the God who is immortal, and instead they glorify idols that resemble mortal people, birds, four-legged animals, and animals that crawl on the ground.

24 Consequently, God lets these people do the lustful things that they desire to do, so that they become spiritually impure and they disgrace their bodies with one another by doing sexually immoral acts. 25 These people stop believing what is true about God and instead believe what is false about idols. They reverently worship things that God has created, instead of worshiping the God who created those things. He is the one whom people should bless forever! May it be so!

26 Because these people do that, God lets them do the dishonorable things they strongly desire to do. For example, their women stop doing natural sexual acts with men and instead do unnatural sexual acts with women. **27** Similarly, the men also stopped doing natural sexual acts with women and lusted intensely after other men. These men do shameless sexual acts with each other. They experience God penalizing them in their own bodies. God must penalize them because they pervert God's natural sexual acts.

28 As these people thought that acknowledging God was worthless, God let their minds become worthless. As a result, they do inappropriate things. **29** These people are completely controlled by all kinds of unrighteous, wicked, covetous, and malicious thoughts. They are completely willing to be jealous, take another's life, argue, deceive, and commit evil deeds against others. They reveal secrets about others. **30** They speak badly of other people. They hate God. They act violently. They think too highly of themselves. They boast about themselves. They think of new kinds of evil things to do. They do not obey their parents. **31** These people are morally foolish. They do not do what they promise to do. They do not care about other people. They do not show mercy to others. **32** These people fully understand that God has righteously declared that people who keep doing such inappropriate things deserve to die spiritually. Nevertheless, they not only keep on doing those inappropriate things, but they even happily approve of people who do such things!

2 **1** Consequently, any one of you who judges another person cannot excuse yourself at all when God condemns you. This is because you are actually condemning yourself when you judge someone else, since you who judge someone else do the exact same things that they do!
2 Certainly, we acknowledge that God will correctly judge those people who continue doing such inappropriate things. **3** You who judge the people who continue to do such inappropriate things while you do the exact same things yourself should certainly not think that you can escape when God judges you! **4** You who despise how abundantly kind, tolerant, and patient God is must certainly know that God's kind acts are meant to cause you to repent. **5** Instead, because you are stubborn and refuse to repent, you are causing God to punish you even more severely. This will happen when God punishes sinners and reveals how justly he judges.

6 God will justly reward or punish everyone for whatever they do. **7** Living eternally is how God repays those people who keep striving for God to glorify, honor, and preserve them

forever. They do this by persisting in doing what is good. 8 By contrast, God will fiercely punish those people who refuse to do what he says is true and right because they are selfishly ambitious. 9 God will cause every human being who does what is evil to become distressed and troubled. This will happen especially to the Jew who does what is evil and also to everyone else who does so. 10 By contrast, God will glorify, honor, and reconcile every person who does what is good. This will happen especially to the Jew who does what is good and also to everyone else who does so. 11 These things are true because God is impartial.

12 We know this about God, because he will punish forever all people who sin without knowing the laws that God gave the Jews even though they do not know those laws. At the same time, God will judge according to his laws whoever sins while knowing those laws. 13 God will judge everyone who sins because God does not make righteous those people who only hear his laws. Rather, God will make righteous those people who obey his laws. 14 God will judge everyone who sins because whenever nations which do not know the laws that God gave the Jews naturally obey rules from those laws, they prove that they know laws within their minds even though they do not know God's laws. 15 By naturally following some laws that God gave through Moses, these people demonstrate that God has made each person aware of how to obey his laws. What they think shows that this is true, in that what each of them thinks will either accuse or even defend their actions. 16 This will happen at the time when God finally judges the hidden thoughts that people think. God's good news that I proclaim teaches that he will judge mankind through the Messiah Jesus.

17 Now, I am addressing you who identify yourselves as Jews: You depend on the laws God gave you to avoid God's judgment. You brag that you know God. 18 You know what God wants. Also, since some people have taught you God's law, you approve of what is superior. 19 You have even convinced yourselves that you Jews are the only ones who can teach those non-Jewish people who do not know about God. You are convinced that only you can enable ignorant people to understand who God is. 20 You have convinced yourself that you should instruct people who are foolish. You have convinced yourself that you should teach people who are as ignorant as infants. You think this way because you know the laws God gave the Jews, which fully contain what we can know and what is true. 21 So even though you Jews have convinced yourself that these things are true, you should teach yourselves to do what you teach others to do because you do not do those things! You keep telling others that they should not

steal, but you steal! 22 You keep telling people not to have sexual relations with people whom they did not marry, but you do so! You supposedly detest idols, but you ransack temples that contain idols! 23 You brag about how well you understand the laws God gave you, but you disgrace God by disobeying those laws! 24 These things are true because it is what the prophet Isaiah meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, "The nations say bad things about God because of how wickedly you Jews act."

25 You Jews who have sinned will be judged because, being circumcised only benefits you if you obey the laws God gave you. However, if you disobey those laws, being circumcised does not benefit you at all. 26 So then, if uncircumcised people obey what God requires in the laws he gave the Jews, God will regard those uncircumcised people as being circumcised. 27 And people who are physically uncircumcised yet fully obey the laws from God will judge you Jews! Although you know the written rules God gave the Jews and you are circumcised, you have disobeyed those laws! 28 This is true because a true Jew is not someone who does Jewish rituals that people can see. Similarly, people cannot see true circumcision on a person's body. 29 Rather, a true Jew is one by means of something that people cannot see. True circumcision happens in a person's mind and the Holy Spirit does it. Obeying the written rules God gave the Jews cannot do it. God commends a true Jew, but other people do not.

3 1 You Jews might say, "If what you have said is true, then surely being a Jew is not advantageous! Surely being circumcised is not beneficial at all!" 2 Then I would say, "Being a Jew benefits a person in many ways!" This is certainly true because, first of all, God trusted the Jews with preserving what he had said in the Scriptures. 3 So you might say, "Some of these Jews were certainly unfaithful to God! How unfaithful those people are certainly cannot invalidate how faithful God is!" 4 Then I would say, "Of course not!" On the contrary, God is always truthful, but everyone else is not. This is what David meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, "The result of my sin is that people will acknowledge that you, God, are right when you speak and victorious when people try to judge you."

5 But you might say, "Suppose this is true and how unrighteous we Jews are actually confirms how righteous God is. That could not possibly mean that God is unrighteous because he punishes us!" (When I talk like this, I am expressing how human beings think.) 6 Then I

would say, "Of course not! If God were unrighteous when he punishes us, then he could not possibly judge anyone in the world!" 7 But then you might say, "Suppose this is true, and my lying further glorifies God and how truthful he is. If that is so, then surely God should not still judge me as if I were sinning! 8 And if this is true, then you should just tell us to act wickedly in order that good things can happen!" (This is exactly what some people say falsely about me and claim that I say. It is right for God to condemn people who speak and act this way!)

9 You Jews might then say, "If what you have said is true, then we are surely not superior to non-Jewish people!" And I would say that indeed we are not. I say this because I have previously charged that all Jews and non-Jewish people cannot stop being sinful. 10 This is what the prophets meant when they wrote in the Scriptures, "No one is righteous, no one at all!"

11 "No one thinks wisely. No one is even trying to know God!

12 Everyone has refused to obey God. As a whole, they are worthless for doing what God wants. No one is kind, no one at all!"

13 "What people say is morally corrupt like the smell of rotten corpses in a grave!
They constantly deceive people by what they say!" "What they say hurts people,
like the venom of venomous snakes!" 14 "They constantly curse others and
speak harshly against them." 15 "They rush eagerly to murder people.
16 Wherever they go, they destroy lives and make people suffer. 17 They do not
understand how to live peacefully with others." 18 "They do not fear God at all!"

19 Certainly, we Jews know all that God says in his laws applies to the Jews, to whom God gave his laws. This is in order that no one can excuse themselves from being judged by God. This is also in order that God can justly punish everyone in the world as guilty. 20 This is true because God will not make anyone righteous with himself simply because they obey the laws he gave the Jews. This is so because those laws only make people aware of how sinful they are.

21 But now God has revealed how he makes people righteous. Becoming righteous is not related to obeying the laws God gave the Jews. Yet, in what they wrote in the Scriptures Moses and the prophets testify about how God makes people righteous. 22 How God makes people righteous is by trusting in Jesus the Messiah. God will make all types of people righteous if they

trust in Jesus. This is because God does not distinguish between different types of people. 23 This is because all types of people sin and fail to acquire the glorious status from God. 24 God makes these sinful people righteous as a gift because he is so kind. People receive this gift from God when God unites them to Jesus the Messiah, who redeemed them from being punished for being sinful. 25 God offered Jesus as the one who atones for everyone's sins. People are rescued from being punished for being sinful by trusting in his sacrificial death. God did this in order to show how God makes people righteous. This happened because God disregarded people's sinful acts that they had previously done. 26 God did this because he is so tolerant. God also did this in order to show how he makes people righteous during our time. This is for the purpose of showing that God is righteous and that he makes people righteous if they trust in Jesus.

27 You Jews might say, "If what you have said is true, then surely no one can boast!" Then I would say, "Indeed, no one can!" Then you might say, "Surely we can become righteous by obeying the laws God gave the Jews! Surely doing those things will make us righteous!" Then I would say, "Absolutely not! On the contrary, people become righteous by trusting in Jesus the Messiah. 28 Indeed, we Jewish Christians consider people to become righteous by trusting in Jesus the Messiah. Being righteous is not related to doing those things that God commanded in the laws he gave the Jews." 29 Or you might say, "Surely God is not only the God of the Jews. Surely he is the God of all the nations too!" So I would say, "Absolutely! He is the God of all the nations too. 30 This is true because there is certainly only one God for all people. He will make righteous both the Jews who trust in Jesus and the non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus." 31 You Jews might say, "Then surely we make the laws God gave us invalid by trusting in Jesus!" So I would say, "Of course not! On the contrary, we confirm that what God said in those laws is valid."

4 1 You Jews might say, "If what you have said is true, then surely our physical ancestor Abraham found out about it. 2 This must be true because if Abraham became righteous based on doing the things that God commanded in his laws, then he could brag about it." On the contrary, I would say that Abraham could not possibly boast about it to God! 3 I say this because, Moses surely tells us in the Scriptures, "Abraham trusted in God, and God considered Abraham to be righteous because he trusted in him." 4 Indeed, when a person works, he does not consider the wage he earns to be a gracious gift. On the contrary, that person considers the

wage he earns to be what his employer owes him. 5 By contrast, when a person does not obey the laws God gave the Jews, but trusts in the God who can make unrighteous people righteous, God considers him to be righteous because he trusted in him. 6 This is also the same thing that David wrote in the Scriptures about how blessed people are when God considers them to be righteous, even though they do not do those things that God commanded. David wrote:

> 7 "People are so happy when God forgives their lawless acts! People are so happy
> when God no longer acknowledges their sinful acts! 8 Any person whom the
> Lord never again considers to be sinful is so happy!"

9 Therefore, these happy people are not only circumcised Jews but even uncircumcised people who are not Jews! This must be true because we Jews quote the scripture that states, "God considers Abraham to be righteous because he trusted in him." 10 So then, you surely know when Abraham trusted in God and God considered him to be righteous! You surely know whether this happened before he was circumcised or afterward! Indeed, it was not while Abraham was circumcised, but while he was still uncircumcised that God considered him to be righteous. 11 Abraham was circumcised as a mark in his body to prove that God had made him righteous because Abraham trusted in him before he was circumcised. This happened in order for him to become the spiritual ancestor for every non-Jewish person who trusts in God in order that God would consider them to be righteous because they trust in him. 12 This also happened in order for Abraham to become the spiritual ancestor of those people who are circumcised, that is, those circumcised Jews who are not only circumcised in their bodies, but who also trust in God the same way that our ancestor Abraham did even before he was circumcised.

13 This is true because when God promised Abraham and those who descend from him that the whole world would belong to him, God did not promise this because Abraham obeyed the laws God gave the Jews. Rather, God promised this because God had made Abraham righteous because Abraham trusted in him. 14 This is true because, if people could inherit what God promised Abraham by obeying the laws he gave the Jews, then trusting in God would become useless! What God promised would also become invalid. 15 This is because the laws God gave the Jews are intended to punish those who disobey them. However, where God's laws do not exist, no one can disobey them. 16 This is why what God promised comes by trusting in him in order to show how kind he is. God was so kind in order that he could secure what he promised

to everyone who has spiritually descended from Abraham. Those who have spiritually descended from Abraham are not only those Jews who obey the laws God gave them, but also those who trust in God as Abraham did. Abraham is the spiritual ancestor of all of us who trust in God.
17 (This is exactly what God said in the Scriptures about Abraham: "I have chosen you to be a spiritual ancestor for numerous people groups.") God considers Abraham to be our spiritual ancestor. Abraham trusted God. God is the one who causes dead people to become alive again. He also commands things that do not exist to exist, then they exist. **18** Abraham trusted in God by hoping in God despite what seemed hopeless. As a result, he became the spiritual ancestor for numerous people groups. This happened just as God had promised him in the Scriptures: "The people who descend from you will become as numerous as the stars in the sky."
19 Abraham thought that his body was too old to produce children. (He was almost 100 years old!) He also thought that his wife Sarah was unable to become pregnant because she never had been able to do so before. Nevertheless, Abraham kept on trusting God. **20** Indeed, Abraham did not faithlessly doubt what God had promised. On the contrary, God empowered Abraham to continue trusting in him while Abraham was glorifying God. **21** God also totally assured Abraham that he is able to do what he had promised to do. **22** And this is why, "God considered Abraham to be righteous because he trusted in him."

23 Yet, when Moses wrote in the Scriptures, "God considered how Abraham trusted him," these words not only refer to Abraham. **24** On the contrary, these words also refer to us who trust in Jesus. God is going to consider how we believers trust him. We are the people who trust him. He is the one who caused our Lord Jesus to become alive again after he had died. **25** God allowed people to kill Jesus because we sinned against God. God also caused Jesus to become alive again in order to make us righteous.

5 **1** Consequently, we should live peacefully with God by means of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah did for us because we have become righteous by trusting in Jesus. **2** Our Lord Jesus the Messiah also allows us to continually experience how kind God is by trusting in Jesus. We can confidently boast that we will share in God's glorious status. **3** This is not the only thing about which we can confidently boast. Rather, we can also confidently boast about the painful things that we have experienced. We can do this because we know that a painful thing that we experience causes us to endure hardships better than before. **4** And being able to endure

hardships results in God approving us. And when God approves us, we become more confident. **5** And when we become confident, we will not be disappointed. This is because the Holy Spirit has enabled us to deeply understand how much God loves us. God has given us this Holy Spirit.

6 In fact, while we were still helpless, Jesus the Messiah died for the sake of us impious people. God caused this to happen at just the right time. **7** Indeed, someone would rarely consider dying for the sake of a person who is righteous, although someone might possibly even bravely consider dying for the sake of a good person. **8** However, God shows his own love towards we believers by this fact: while we were still sinful, Jesus the Messiah died for our benefit! **9** Consequently, since the Messiah's sacrificial death has already made us righteous, it is even more certain that he will rescue us when God finally punishes sinners! **10** Indeed, God's Son Jesus died to reconcile us to God while we were still his enemies. Therefore, since Jesus has already reconciled us to God, it is even more certain that he will rescue us when God punishes sinners because he is alive again! **11** Now these are not the only things God does for us. Rather, we also boast about God by means of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah has done for us. Jesus has already reconciled us with God!

12 So then, sin started existing in the world because one man sinned, and living things started to die because he sinned. In the same way, everyone started dying as well, because everyone sins. **13** Indeed, people throughout the world sinned before God gave his laws to the Jews. However, God did not legally regard what they did as sinning, since those laws did not yet exist to identify what it means to sin. **14** However, everyone died from the time of the first man Adam until the time of Moses. Even those people died who did not sin by violating the same command God gave to Adam. Adam is like the person who would come later. **15** But what God has kindly given us is not the same as how Adam rejected God's command. In fact, it is true that many people died because the one man Adam rejected God's command. But how kind God is and that which God kindly gives through the one man Jesus the Messiah extend to many people and are much greater! **16** Yet, what God gives is not like what happened because the one man Adam sinned. This is true because, in fact, God judged everyone after the sinful thing that Adam did, which resulted in God condemning everyone. By contrast, what God kindly gave people after they rejected his commands many times resulted in God making them righteous. **17** Indeed, since everyone died because the one man Adam rejected God's command,

it is even more certain that those people who accept how abundantly kind God is and are those people whom he makes righteous will live in control of themselves. This will happen because of what Jesus the Messiah has done.

18 Therefore, in the way that God condemned everyone because Adam rejected God's command, in the same way, God makes everyone righteous, which results in them living eternally, because of the righteous act that Jesus did. 19 Indeed, in the same way that people became sinful because the one man Adam disobeyed God, in the same way many people will become righteous because the one man Jesus obeyed God. 20 Yet God added his laws in order that people might reject his commands even more. Nevertheless, whenever people began to sin even more, then even more God showed how kind he is! 21 This happened so that God could be gracious to people by making them righteous. Just as being sinful controlled people by making them die, in the same way, when God makes people righteous, they live forever. This is because of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah has done.

6 1 Someone might say, "If what you have said is true, then surely we believers should keep on sinning in order that, even more, God might show how kind he is even more!" 2 Then I would say, "Of course not!" We who are no longer controlled by sinning surely must not continue living sinfully! 3 You surely know that God unites to the Messiah Jesus whomever someone baptizes, and it is as if that baptized person also died with the Messiah! 4 So, by being baptized as if we died with the Messiah, it is like God buried us in the tomb with Jesus. This is so in order that, just as God the Father's glorious power caused the Messiah to become alive again after he had died, in the same way, we too can live a new way of living. 5 Indeed, since we share in what resembles Jesus dying, we will surely also share in God making us alive again. 6 We know that God also did away with our former sinful way of living when people crucified Jesus. He did this in order to totally remove the way sin controls us, so that we no longer have to live sinfully. 7 This is because, when people who live sinfully share in Jesus' death, God frees them from having to live sinfully. 8 Now since it is as if we died with the Messiah, we trust that we will also live with him eternally. 9 We know that the Messiah can never die again, because God caused him to become alive again after he had died. Nothing can ever cause the Messiah to die again! 10 This is because when Jesus died, he only had to die that one time only in order to remove the way sin controls people. Now that he is alive again, he

lives in order to glorify God. **11** Similarly, you too regard yourselves as no longer controlled by sinning. Indeed, regard yourselves as alive in order to glorify God because God has united you to the Messiah Jesus. **12** Since this is true, do not allow your sinful desires to control you. This would result in you doing the sinful things that you want to do. **13** Do not use your body parts in order to do unrighteous things or to sin. Instead, live in order to do what God wants you to do, like people whom God caused to live again after they had died. Also, use your body parts in order to do righteous things to glorify God. **14** Indeed, do not allow your desire to sin to control you because the laws God gave the Jews do not control you. Instead, how kind God is controls you.

15 Someone might say, "If what you have said is true, then surely we believers should keep on sinning because the laws God gave the Jews do not control us. Instead, how kind God is controls us!" Then I would say, "Of course not!" **16** You surely know that if you submit yourselves to be controlled by a thing or person, you become like slaves to that thing or person you submit to! This is true whether you submit yourselves to living sinfully, which will kill you eternally, or you submit yourselves to God, which will make you righteous. **17** Although you used to submit yourselves to living sinfully, now you are sincerely submissive to the type of teaching to which God has submitted you. Thank God! **18** Indeed, since God liberated you from living sinfully, you are now serving God righteously. **19** (I Paul am speaking in human terms, because you are spiritually immature.) Indeed, just as you previously used your body parts to live impurely and to increasingly break God's laws, in the same way, now use your body parts to live righteously. This will cause you to live like God's people should live. **20** This is because when you used to submit yourselves to living sinfully, you were not living righteously. **21** So, formerly you did not benefit from those sinful things you did that now embarrass you. This is because those things will eventually kill you eternally. **22** But now that you trust in Jesus, God has freed you from living sinfully and has caused you to serve him the way slaves would serve him. Therefore, you receive what is beneficial, which results in you living like God's people should live. Indeed, living in that way will eventually result in you living eternally. **23** I say this because living sinfully causes those who do so to die eternally, but God graciously causes those who are united to our Lord, the Messiah Jesus, to live eternally.

7 **1** My fellow Jewish believers, you are well-aware that the laws God gave the Jews must be obeyed by Jewish people throughout their whole lives. (I know that you are well-aware of this fact, because I am speaking to people who are familiar with the laws God gave the Jews.) **2** For instance, according to the laws God gave the Jews, a married woman must remain married to her husband as long as he lives. However, if her husband dies, God's law no longer requires her to remain married to him. **3** Therefore, if she marries another man while her husband is alive, according to God's law she will be an adulterous woman. However, if her husband dies, she no longer has to obey what God's law requires of those who are married. As a result, she would not be an adulterous woman if she married another man. **4** So, my fellow Jewish believers, by means of the Messiah dying on the cross the laws God gave the Jews no longer control you. God did this in order to unite you to the Messiah, as if you were marrying a new husband. He is the person whom God made alive again after he had died. God did this in order that we may do things that please him. **5** Indeed, when living sinfully used to control us, the laws God gave us caused us to want to sin even more. Our living sinfully controlled what we did with our body parts. As a result, we would eventually die eternally. **6** But now that we trust in Jesus, God cancels what his laws require us to do. The laws God gave the Jews no longer control us as if we were prisoners. As a result, we now serve God in the new way that comes from the Holy Spirit. We no longer serve God in the old way that the written rules God gave the Jews require.

7 Someone might say, "If what you have said is true, then surely the laws God gave the Jews are sinful!" Then I would say, "Of course not!" On the contrary, without the laws God gave the Jews, I would never have become aware of what it means to sin. For instance, if God did not say in his laws, "You must not covet," I would never have become aware of what it means to covet. **8** However, since I am sinful, I wanted to covet in many ways because I knew that God commanded us not to covet. This is because if the laws God gave the Jews did not exist, living sinfully would cease. **9** There was a time when I was living without being aware of the laws God gave the Jews. But, when I became aware of those commandments, I wanted to sin even more. **10** I became spiritually dead. God's command was supposed to result in me living eternally. But God's command actually will result in me dying eternally. **11** This is so because I wanted to sin even more because I knew what God had commanded. When I sinned, I tricked myself. Then disobeying what God had commanded killed me spiritually. **12** So the laws God

gave the Jews are worthy of God and what God has commanded is worthy of God, just, and good.

13 So, God's laws, which are good, surely did not cause me to die spiritually! Of course not! Rather, living sinfully did so. This happened so that God's good laws would reveal how sinful it is to live sinfully. This also happened so that what God commands would reveal that living sinfully is utterly sinful.

14 This is true because we are all aware that the laws God gave the Jews are from God's Spirit. But as for me, I am spiritually weak. It is as if I must serve as a slave to living sinfully. **15** This is true because I do not comprehend what I do! Indeed, I keep on doing what I do not want to do. But I do what I hate that I do. **16** Now because I do what I do not want to do, this proves that I agree with the laws God gave the Jews. I also testify that they are good laws. **17** This means that now I am no longer the one who causes me to do these sinful things. Rather, my wanting to live sinfully causes me to do them. **18** Indeed, I am aware that I am not good at all. In other words, my sinful self is not good at all. This is true because, even though I really want to do what is good, I am unable to do so. **19** Indeed, I do not do the good things I want to do. Rather, I keep on doing evil things that I do not want to do. **20** Now because I do what I do not want to do, I am no longer the one who causes me to do these sinful things. Rather, my wanting to live sinfully causes me to do them. **21** Consequently, I realized that a principle exists: I keep on doing evil things, even though I really want to do good things. **22** This is true because the laws God gave the Jews make my mind rejoice. **23** Yet, I notice another principle that controls what I do with my body parts. This principle conflicts with the other principle that my mind accepts. It also controls me, making me its prisoner by means of the principle that I tend to live sinfully. Living sinfully controls what I do with my body parts. **24** I am truly a wretched person! I feel as though there is no one who could possibly rescue me from this body that kills me! **25** I thank God who rescued me by means of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! Therefore, I actually do obey with my mind the laws God gave the Jews. Yet at the same time with my sinful self I obey the principle that I tend to live sinfully.

8 **1** So now, God absolutely does not condemn anyone whom he has united with the Messiah Jesus. **2** This is true because the principle that pertains to the life-giving Holy Spirit

has caused you **believers** to no longer be controlled by the principle that causes people to sin and die **eternally**. **It did this** by uniting you with the Messiah Jesus. **3** Indeed, God **accomplished** what the laws **he gave the Jews** could not accomplish, because they could not prevent people from living sinfully. Through **the crucifying of his Son's** body, God removed **how** sinning **controls people**. **He did this** by sending his own Son **Jesus to the world** in a human body **that was** like the bodies of sinful people. **God sent his Son** in order to **remove** that which causes man to sin. **4** **God did these things** so that we **believers** could do the righteous acts that the laws **he gave the Jews** required. We can live as people whom living sinfully does not control. Rather, **we can live as people** whom the **Holy** Spirit controls. **5** **This is true** because those **people** whom living sinfully controls think about those things that are related to living sinfully. However, those people whom the **Holy** Spirit controls think about those things that are related to the **Holy** Spirit. **6** Indeed, focusing on living sinfully will cause **a person** to die **eternally**. However, focusing on the **Holy** Spirit will cause **a person** to live **eternally and** peacefully. **7** **This is true** because **people** who focus on living sinfully are God's enemies. **This is** because they do not voluntarily obey the laws God gave **the Jews**; they are incapable **of doing so**. **8** But those whom living sinfully controls are incapable of pleasing God. **9** By contrast, you **believers** are not those whom living sinfully controls. Rather, you are those whom the **Holy** Spirit controls because God's Spirit really does reside within you. But if some person does not possess Jesus the Messiah's Spirit, this person does not belong to the Messiah. **10** Now, since the Messiah resides within you **believers**, the **Holy** Spirit gives **you eternal** life because he has made you righteous. **This is true** even though your bodies will die because you sin. **11** The **Holy** Spirit does indeed reside within you. **He came** from God, who caused Jesus to become alive again after he had died. **Since this is true,** God, who caused the Messiah Jesus to become alive again after he had died, will also cause your physical bodies to become alive **again** by his Spirit. This **Spirit** resides within you.

12 Therefore, **my** fellow believers, we are obligated. **But we are not obligated** to live sinfully, **which means** to live like those whom living sinfully controls. **13** Indeed, if you live like those whom living sinfully controls, you will die **eternally**. However, if the **Holy** Spirit enables you to stop doing what is sinful with your bodies, you will live **eternally**.

14 **This is** because those people whom God's Spirit guides are God's **spiritual** children. **15** Indeed, God has not given you **believers** an enslaved mind to terrify you, such as you had

before. Rather, God has given you the Holy Spirit to spiritually adopt you as his children. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to cry out, “Abba, my Father!” 16 The Holy Spirit personally testifies, along with our own minds, that we are God’s spiritual children. 17 Since we are God’s spiritual children, we are also those who will inherit blessings from God. We inherit blessings from God himself and also together with the Messiah Jesus. This is true only if we keep suffering together with the Messiah in order for God to also glorify us together with the Messiah.

18 Indeed, I regard what we believers in the Messiah suffer at this time as being incomparable to what glorious things God will reveal to us in the future. 19 Indeed, what God created is very eagerly waiting for the time when God reveals whom his spiritual children are. 20 This is because God subjugated what he created so that it became useless. What God created did not want this to happen. Rather, God subjugated what he created because he wanted to do so. He did this to keep the creation confidently expecting 21 that God would also enable what he created to stop decaying and let it freely experience the same glorious status that belongs to his spiritual children. 22 Indeed, we are aware that, even at the present time, everything God has created keeps groaning and suffering together like a mother experiencing pain before bearing a child. 23 It is not only what God created that groans! On the contrary, even we ourselves who possess the Holy Spirit as the first portion from God feel suffering. We feel this way while we eagerly wait for God to spiritually adopt us, which will be when God redeems our bodies. 24 This is so because God rescued us while we confidently expect this. If we already had what we have been confidently expecting, then we would have nothing to confidently expect. This is because surely nobody confidently expects something that he already has. 25 Yet, if we keep on confidently expecting what we do not yet have, then we will keep on eagerly waiting for it while persevering.

26 The Holy Spirit similarly also assists us because we are weak. This is because we are not aware for what we should pray. However, the Holy Spirit personally pleads on our behalf by groaning without speaking words. 27 Now God is the one who investigates what we think and feel. He is aware of what the Holy Spirit intends, because the Spirit pleads for the sake of God’s people according to what God wants.

28 We are certain that God makes all things that happen to benefit those who love him. They are the people whom God called because he previously planned to do so. **29** This is because those whom God chose in advance, he also decided in advance to make resemble his Son Jesus. God did these things in order for his Son Jesus to have first place among many spiritual siblings. **30** Certainly, the people whom God chose in advance to become his people, he also summoned to become his people. And those people whom God summoned to become his people, he also made righteous. And those people whom God made righteous, he will also make glorious.

31 Since these things are true, then we should say this about them: since God supports us, surely no one is powerful enough to oppose us! **32** God did not even spare his own Son, Jesus. On the contrary, God handed him over to die for the sake of us all. So God surely will also graciously give us, along with Jesus, every blessing! **33** Surely no one can rightly accuse those whom God chose to become his people! This is because God is the one who makes people righteous. **34** Surely no one can condemn God's people! This is because the Messiah Jesus is the one who died. Furthermore, he is the one whom God made alive again. He is also at the place of highest honor next to God, and he even pleads for our sake. **35** Surely no one can make Jesus stop loving us! If people trouble us or distress us or persecute us, or if we are hungry or naked or in danger, or if people kill us with swords, surely none of those things can make Jesus stop loving us! **36** This is what God meant when he said in the Scriptures, "They constantly kill us because of you, God. They consider us to be like sheep for them to slaughter." **37** However, he who loved us enables us to completely overcome all of these things that might happen to us. **38** In fact, God has persuaded me that none of these things—whether being dead, or what happens while we are alive, or angels, or demons who rule, or things that are happening to us, or things that will happen to us, or powerful demons, **39** or what is above us, or what is below us, or anything else that God created—can stop God from loving us! God loves us because we are united to the Messiah Jesus, our Lord!

9 **1** I speak what is true as one whom God has united with the Messiah. I do not speak what is false. The Holy Spirit confirms what my conscience testifies within myself when I say **2** that I grieve very greatly and constantly! **3** I do so because I truly wish that God would curse me and completely alienate me from Jesus the Messiah for my fellow kinsmen to be saved! They

are physically related to me. 4 These kinsmen of mine are the Israelites. They are those whom God spiritually adopted. God allowed them to experience how glorious he is. God made covenants with them. God gave them his laws. God gave them the way to worship him. God also made promises to them. 5 Our Jewish forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were Israelites. The Messiah is also one of them, as someone physically related to them. The Messiah rules over everything. He is the blessed God forever. May it be so!

6 Yet God has not failed to do what he promised to the Israelites. This is true because not all people who have physically descended from Israel are true Israelites. 7 It is also not true that all those who physically descended from Abraham are Abraham's true offspring. Rather, as God says to Abraham in the Scriptures, "I will identify your true offspring through those who descend from Isaac." 8 In other words, the people who only physically descended from Abraham are not God's spiritual children. Rather, those who became God's spiritual children as a result of what God promised are regarded as Abraham's true spiritual offspring. 9 Indeed, this is what God promised would happen when he said in the Scriptures, "At a set time, I will come. As a result, Sarah will give birth to a son." 10 This is not the only promise God made. But God made a promise also when Rebekah became pregnant by this same man, Isaac. He is the ancestor of us Israelites. 11 Indeed, God chose only one of her two sons even though she had not yet born them and they had not yet done anything right or wrong. God did this in order that what he had previously planned with regard to choosing people would happen. 12 God did not choose only one of her sons because of what he did. Rather, it was because God summons those whom he chooses. This is why God told Rebekah in the Scriptures, "Your older son will become a slave to your younger son." 13 This is what God meant when he said in the Scriptures, "I love the younger son Jacob, but I emphatically reject the older son Esau."

14 Someone might say, "If what you have said is true, then surely God must be unrighteous!" Then I would say, "Of course not!" 15 We know that God is truly righteous because God told Moses in the Scriptures, "I will be merciful to whomever I want to be merciful. I will be compassionate to whomever I want to be compassionate." 16 Therefore, who receives God's mercy does not depend on how much someone desires to receive it. Who receives God's mercy also does not depend on how much effort someone exerts. Rather, it depends on what God wants. He is the one who is merciful. 17 Indeed, this is what God told Pharaoh in the Scriptures, "I allowed you to become king in Egypt for this exact reason: in order that I could

use you to exhibit how powerful I am. I also allowed you to become king in order that I will be famous all over the world." 18 Therefore, God is merciful to whomever he wants to be merciful. But he makes stubborn whomever he wants to become stubborn.

19 As a result of what I have said, one of you may tell me, "If what you have said is true, then surely God should not blame people for doing what they do! God should not do that because no one can ever stop him from doing whatever he wants to do!" 20 Then I would say, "You mere human! You who argue with God are truly not worthy to do so! Who God has made surely must not say to God who made him, 'You should not have made me to be like this!'" 21 God can surely do whatever he wants to do with what he has made. In the same way, someone who makes containers can do whatever he wants to do with his materials. From the same material he can make both containers for special use and containers for ordinary use. 22 Now, you should surely not argue with God because he very patiently endured those people whom he would punish and had prepared to destroy eternally. He endured them because he wanted to show how angry he is and to reveal how powerful he is. 23 God also endures those whom he will punish in order to reveal how abundantly glorious he is to those people to whom he will be merciful. God has previously arranged to glorify these people eternally. 24 We are also among those people to whom God is merciful and whom God has summoned. God summons people from among Jewish people and even from among non-Jewish people. 25 In the same way, God also told Hosea in the Scriptures, "I will give the name 'My people' to people who were not my people. I will also give the name 'Loved one' to the person whom I did not love."

26 God also told Hosea, "Then it will happen, in the exact same location where I previously told them, 'You are not my people,' I will give them the name, 'Children of God who lives.'"

27 Indeed, elsewhere in the Scriptures Isaiah shouts out about the people of Israel, "Even though there were as many Israelites as there are grains of sand along the seashore, God will refrain from punishing only a few of them. 28 This is because the Lord will fully and swiftly accomplish what he promised to do on the earth."

29 It is also just like Isaiah previously said in the Scriptures, "Unless the Lord, who rules over angel armies, had preserved offspring for us Israelites, he would have utterly destroyed us like he destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah."

30 Since these things are true, we should surely say that although the nations are not trying to be righteous, they became righteous. However, they became righteous by trusting God. 31 By contrast, the people of Israel tried to obey the laws God gave them in order to become righteous. But they could not become righteous by obeying those laws. 32 The reason why the people of Israel could not become righteous is that they did not try to become righteous by trusting God. Instead, they tried to become righteous by working for it. Because of this the Messiah offended them when he came. It is as if the Messiah is a stone that causes them to trip. 33 This is what God meant when he had Isaiah write in the Scriptures, "Pay attention! I am placing in Jerusalem someone who is like a stone that trips people and a rock that offends people. But God will not humiliate anyone who trusts in that person."

10 1 My fellow believers, I strongly desire that God will save the Israelites. I also pray for him to save them! 2 This is because I personally confirm that they are zealous about God. However, they are not zealous based on fully knowing God. 3 This is because they are not aware of how God makes people righteous, and they try to make themselves righteous. This is why they refuse to subject themselves to the way God makes people righteous. 4 They were wrong to try to make themselves righteous, because Jesus the Messiah has ended the laws that God gave the Jews. Christ did this in order for God to make righteous anyone who trusts in Jesus.

5 Indeed, this is what Moses wrote in the Scriptures about being righteous by obeying the laws God gave the Jews: "The person who obeys all God's laws perfectly will live eternally by doing so." 6 However, this is what Moses said in the Scriptures about people becoming righteous by trusting in God, "Do not say to yourselves, 'Surely no one can go up to heaven!'" (This refers to trying to make the Messiah come down to the earth.) 7 Moses also said not to say, "Surely no one can go down into the bottomless pit!" (This refers to trying to make the Messiah become alive again after he had died.) 8 However, Moses also said this in the Scriptures about people becoming righteous by trusting in God, "You can easily know what God said. You can proclaim it and know it personally." This refers to what God said about trusting in him. This is what we believers in the Messiah keep announcing. 9 What we keep announcing is that God will save any of you who verbally acknowledges that Jesus is the Lord over all things and personally trusts that God made Jesus become alive again after he had died. 10 This is true

because God makes righteous anyone who personally trusts in Jesus, and he saves anyone who verbally acknowledges that Jesus is the Lord. 11 Indeed, this is what God said in the Scriptures, "God will not humiliate anyone who trusts in that person." 12 Indeed, the Lord Jesus does not discriminate between Jewish people and non-Jewish people. This is because Jesus is the same Lord who rules over everyone. He generously blesses all people who call out to him to save them. 13 Indeed, Joel wrote in the Scriptures, "God will save all people who call out to the Lord to save them."

14 So, people certainly will not call out for the Lord Jesus to save them if they do not trust in him. And people certainly will not trust in Jesus if they have not heard about him. And people certainly will not hear about Jesus if someone does not proclaim to them who he is. 15 And certainly people would not proclaim to other people who Jesus is unless someone sends them out! This is what Isaiah meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, "It is a beautiful thing when people go and declare to other people the good news about good things!" 16 However, not all Jews accepted the good news about Jesus. Indeed, this is what Isaiah meant when he said in the Scriptures, "Lord, no one trusts what we say!" 17 So then, a person can only trust in Jesus by hearing about him. And a person can only hear about Jesus through hearing the message that is about the Messiah. 18 However, this is what I say, "The Jews most definitely heard the message!" It is a fact. As David wrote in the Scriptures, "The heavenly bodies are like witnesses and everyone throughout the entire world could hear what they said."

19 This is also what I say, "The people of Israel most definitely understood the message!" God first said through Moses in the Scriptures, "I will personally make you envious and angry by using a nation that does not belong to me and does not even know me." 20 Moreover, God quite boldly declared through Isaiah in the Scriptures, "I revealed myself to those non-Jewish people who were not interested in knowing me and did not even ask about me."

21 However, God told the people of Israel in the Scriptures, "I am always inviting you to know me, but you constantly disobey and oppose me!"

11 1 Since these things are true, this is what I say, "God certainly has not rejected his people, the Israelites!" Of course not! I know this is true because I too am one of the Israelites. I descended from Abraham. More specifically, I descended from the tribe that descended from

Benjamin. 2 God did not discard his people. They are the people whom he chose in advance.
You certainly are aware of what the Prophet Elijah said in the Scriptures when he appealed to
God against the people of Israel! 3 Elijah said, "Lord, the people of Israel murdered all of your
prophets except for me! They demolished all of your altars! I am the very last prophet who is
still alive! Now, they are trying to kill me too!" 4 However, this is how God replied to Elijah,
"I have kept alive 7,000 men for my purposes. These men have not worshipped the false god
Baal." 5 So, similarly, at this time some faithful Israelites also remain. This is because God has
graciously chosen them to remain. 6 Yet because God chooses his people based on how gracious
he is, God does not choose his people based on what they do. If God chose people based on what
they do, then how gracious he is would not really be gracious.

7 So this is what we should conclude: Although the people of Israel keep trying to make
themselves righteous, they cannot do so. Instead, those whom God graciously chose from them
became righteous. But God made stubborn those people of Israel whom he did not graciously
choose. 8 This is exactly what God meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, "God caused the
people of Israel to not think properly. Until this present day, God has made them completely
unable to understand how to become righteous." 9 David also stated in the Scriptures, "O God,
make the luxurious way they live punish them completely like a hunter catches an animal in a
net or trap! Make the luxurious way they live cause them to sin and pay them back for sinning!

10 Make them unable to understand! Make them suffer like slaves forever!"

11 Since these things are true, this is what I say, "The Jewish people were certainly not
offended in order that God would completely reject them!" Of course not! Rather, God saves
non-Jewish people because the Jewish people disobeyed him. This happened in order for God
to make the Jewish people envious of non-Jewish people who know him. 12 Indeed, God used
how the Jewish people disobeyed him and failed to make themselves righteous to abundantly
bless people from all the nations in the whole world. So, when the complete amount of faithful
Jewish people become righteous, there will be even greater blessings!

13 But now I am speaking to you non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus. God indeed made
me his representative to non-Jewish people. Therefore, I show how glorious is what I do to
minister to non-Jewish people. 14 If possible, I want to make those who I am physically related
to, the Jews, envious of the non-Jewish people who know God, so that God will save some of

them. **15** Indeed, God is reconciling with people in the world as a result of him rejecting the Jewish people. So, when God accepts the Jewish people, it will result in God making alive those who are dead. **16** Indeed, because the ancestors of the Jewish people belong to God, just like the first portion of a lump of dough belongs to God, all the Jewish people belong to God, just like that whole lump of dough belongs to God. Also, because the ancestors of the Jewish people belonged to God, just like the root of an olive tree belongs to God, all the Jewish people belong to God, just like the branches of that same tree belong to God.

17 Indeed, God has removed some of the Jewish people from his people, as a farmer breaks unfruitful branches off of an olive tree. But, God has made you non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus part of his people, as a farmer grafts wild olive branches into a cultivated tree. You also share together in benefitting from being part of God's people, as grafted branches share in the nutrition in the olive tree root. **18** Therefore, you non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus must not boast against the Jewish people whom God removed, even though they are like broken off branches! If you do boast, you must realize that you indeed do not sustain the Jewish people. Rather, they sustain you, as the root sustains the branches! **19** So then, you might say, "God removed some of the Jewish people from his people, as a farmer breaks unfruitful branches off of a tree. God did this in order that he could join me to his people, as a farmer grafts a branch into a tree." **20** I would reply by saying that what you said is correct. God removed some of the Jewish people from being his people, as a farmer breaks off unfruitful branches because they were unfaithful. However, you non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus remain part of God's people by trusting in him. Do not arrogantly think that you are better than unbelieving Jewish people! Rather, fear God! **21** You should fear God because he did not show pity to the faithless Jewish people, who are like natural branches. So, he will not show pity to you non-Jewish people if you stop trusting in Jesus!

22 Since this is true, pay attention to how kind and severe God can be! God acts severely toward those who stop trusting in him. However, God will act kindly toward you non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus if you continue accepting how kind he is. But, if you do not do this, God will reject you, like a farmer cuts an unfruitful branch off of a tree! **23** However, if those faithless Jewish people believe in Jesus, God will allow them to rejoin his people, just as a farmer grafts branches into a tree. This is because God is powerful enough to rejoin the Jewish people to his people. **24** Indeed, God removed you non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus from the nations and joined you to his people, as a farmer cuts off a branch from a naturally wild olive

tree and grafts it into a cultivated olive tree, even though doing so is not natural. Since this is true, God will certainly join Israelites back into his people, just as a farmer grafts a naturally cultivated olive branch back into its own tree.

25 I say this because I really want you, my non-Jewish fellow believers, to know what God had previously hidden from people, so that you do not become arrogant. God had previously hidden from people the fact that some of the people of Israel will stubbornly oppose him until all the non-Jewish people God has chosen have joined his people. 26 Then, in the same way, God will save all of the people of Israel. This is what Isaiah meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, "God will send from Jerusalem someone to rescue his people. That man will make the descendants of Jacob stop being ungodly."

27 God says, "This is the agreement that I will make with the descendants of Jacob, when I forgive them for the sinful things that they have done."

28 With regard to Jewish people rejecting the good news, they are enemies of God for your benefit. However, with regard to God choosing Jewish people, God loves them for the sake of what he promised their ancestors. 29 This is true because God does not revoke the things he graciously gives. He also does not revoke the people whom he summons to be his people.
30 Indeed, it is just as you non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus used to disobey God, but now God has been merciful to you because the Jewish people disobeyed him. 31 In the same way, the Jewish people also are now disobeying God because God has been merciful to you non-Jewish people. This happened in order for God to now also be merciful to them. 32 Indeed, God allowed everyone to disobey him in order to be merciful to them.

33 God is so very wealthy, wise, and knowledgeable! No one can fully understand what he does! 34 Indeed, as Isaiah wrote, "No one could ever comprehend what the Lord thinks or advise him!" 35 Furthermore, "No one could ever give God anything that would cause God to owe him something!"

36 No one can do these things, because everything came from God, exists by God, and exists for God. I pray that everyone will glorify him forever. May this truly be so!

12 1 So then, considering everything that I have told you, I exhort you fellow believers,
based on how compassionate God is: Devote yourselves to God, as if you were living animals
someone offers to God. Be holy and please God. Doing so is the reasonable way for you to
serve God. 2 Do not change yourselves to be like the sinful people who live at the current time.
Rather, let God change the way you behave by changing the way you think in order that you
can test and prove what God wants you to do. God wants you to do what is good, pleasing, and
flawless.

3 Indeed, based on how God has kindly authorized me to represent him, I am telling every
one of you to not think you are better than you really are. Rather, think properly about
yourselves, according to the amount of trusting in God that God has apportioned to each one of
you. 4 You must think properly about yourselves because, in the same way that a human body
has many parts that all function for different purposes, 5 so also, we many believers in the
Messiah are united to the Messiah as one group. Each one of us is united to each other like the
individual parts of a human body are united. 6 Yet we believers in the Messiah have received
different spiritual abilities in accordance with what God has kindly given to us. If God has
enabled you to prophesy, then prophesy in accordance with the amount of trusting in God that
God has apportioned to you. 7 If God has enabled you to serve, then you should serve others. If
God has enabled you to teach others, then you should teach others. 8 If God has enabled you to
encourage others, then you should encourage others. If God has enabled you to give what you
have to others, then you should generously give what you have to others. If God has enabled you
to lead others, then you should lead others diligently. If God has enabled you to be merciful,
then you should cheerfully be merciful.

9 Love each other genuinely. Detest what is wicked. Fervently retain what is good. 10 Be
affectionate toward each other in regard to loving fellow believers. Be the first to honor other
fellow believers. 11 Do not be lazy, but be diligent. Be sincerely enthusiastic. Serve the Lord.
12 Rejoice because you are confident in the Lord. Be patient when you suffer. Pray
persistently. 13 Share what you have to provide what God's people need. Find opportunities to
welcome others into your home. 14 Ask God to bless the people who mistreat you. Ask God to
bless them rather than curse them. 15 Rejoice along with those people who are rejoicing. Cry
along with those who are crying. 16 Be as concerned for each other as you are for yourselves.

Do not think arrogantly about yourselves. Rather, associate with humble people. Do not be arrogant. 17 Do not do something evil to someone who has done something evil to you. Think carefully about doing things that everyone considers to be good. 18 Live peacefully with everyone whenever it is possible for you to do so. 19 Fellow believers whom I love, do not retaliate when people do something evil against you. Rather, let God punish them. I say this because Moses wrote in the Scriptures, "The Lord says, 'I will retaliate when people do something evil against you. I will punish them according to what they have done.'" 20 Rather than permitting us to retaliate, God instructed us in the Scriptures, "Feed your enemy if that person is hungry. Give your enemy something to drink if that person is thirsty. Do this because when you do so, your enemy will feel ashamed, as if you were piling up burning coals on top of that person's head." 21 In other words, do not let what is evil defeat you by causing you to do what is evil. Rather, defeat what is evil by doing what is good.

13 1 Every one of you must submit yourselves to those whom God has authorized to govern you. This is because no one can govern unless God authorizes them to do so. God has instituted the existing governments. 2 So people who resist those whom God has authorized to govern are opposing what God has commanded. God will punish those people who oppose those whom he has authorized to govern. 3 Indeed, the people who rule are not supposed to terrify those people who do what is good. Rather, they are supposed to terrify those people who do what is evil. If you do not want to fear those whom God authorizes to rule, then do what is good and those who rule will commend you for doing so. 4 This is because the people whom God authorizes to rule serve God for your benefit. But if you do what is evil, you should be afraid, because God has authorized those people who rule to punish people for a good reason. Indeed, those people who rule serve God by avenging what is evil in order to punish anyone who practices what is evil. 5 Consequently, you must submit yourselves to those people whom God authorizes to rule. You must do this not only because they can punish you, but also because you know that to disobey them is to disobey God! 6 Indeed, you also pay taxes because of these things. You also pay taxes because those people whom God authorizes to rule serve God. They devote themselves to serving by governing. 7 Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay taxes to whom you owe taxes. Pay fees to whom you owe fees. Fear those people whom you should fear. Honor those people whom you should honor.

8 Do not owe anything to anyone. Rather, continue to love other people who believe in the Messiah as if you owe it to them. Do this because someone who loves another person accomplishes what God required in the laws he gave the Jews. 9 This is true because God commanded these things in his laws when he said, “Do not have sexual relations with someone whom you did not marry. Do not murder. Do not rob people. Do not lust for what belongs to other people.” You could summarize anything else that God commands in the laws he gave the Jews with this other thing God commanded: “Love other people in the same way you love yourself.” 10 When you love other people, you do not do evil things to them. This is why loving other people accomplishes what God required in the laws he gave the Jews.

11 Do these things because you know what time it is. It is already the time for you to be spiritually alert because the time when Jesus will return to finally save us is now closer than when we began trusting in him. 12 In the same way that the night ends just before the day begins, the time of this sinful world is almost over, and Jesus will return soon. So, we must stop doing what is evil, which is like what people do when it is dark. Instead, we must oppose what is evil by doing what is good, which is like a soldier puts on his armor to fight the enemy during the day. 13 We must behave appropriately, as if it were daytime and people could see what we do. We must not celebrate drunkenly or get drunk at all. We must not do any unrestrained sexually immoral acts at all. We must not quarrel with others or be jealous of others. 14 Rather than doing those things, act like the Lord Jesus the Messiah would act. Do not concern yourselves with anything that is related to what your sinful self wants to do.

14 1 Welcome any fellow believer in the Messiah who is immature in how they believe. Do not welcome them in order to argue with them about matters of opinion. 2 There are some people who are convinced that they can eat any kind of food. But the immature believer in the Messiah thinks that they can only eat vegetables. 3 The believer in the Messiah who eats every kind of food must not scorn his fellow believer who does not eat every kind of food. The believer in the Messiah who does not eat every kind of food also must not judge his fellow believer who eats every kind of food. This is because God has welcomed both of them. 4 You should not judge your fellow believer, who is like a slave belonging to another master. He either pleases or does not please his master, according to how the master judges. Yet God will make him pleasing to himself because the Lord can do so.

5 Some people consider certain days to be special, while other people consider all days **to be the same**. Each person must be completely certain **that what they do honors God**. **6** The person who thinks certain days are special does so in order to **honor** the Lord. The person who eats **every kind of food** does so in order to **honor** the Lord. **This is** because that person is thankful to God. The person who refuses to eat **certain foods** does so in order to **honor** the Lord. That person is thankful to God as well. **7** **This is true** because not one of us **believers in the Messiah** lives **only** to **please** himself, and not one of us dies **only** to **please** himself. **8** Indeed, while we **believers in the Messiah** live, we live to **please** the Lord. When we die, we die to **please** the Lord. So then, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. **9** Indeed, this is why the Messiah **Jesus** died and **became** alive **again**: in order to become Lord over those who are dead and those who are alive.

10 As for you, those of you who judge your fellow believers must not do so! You also must not scorn your fellow believers! **Do not do these things** because **one day** God will judge all of us **who believe in the Messiah**. **11** Indeed, Isaiah wrote in the Scriptures, "The Lord says **this oath**, 'As certainly as I am alive, **it is just as certain that** everyone will worship me. And everyone will acknowledge to me **that I am God**.'"

12 Therefore, each one of us **who believes in the Messiah** will certainly answer to God for whatever we do **while we are alive**.

13 So we must stop judging other believers. Instead, we must resolve not to do anything that could tempt our fellow believers to sin. **14** I am absolutely convinced by the Lord Jesus that no **food** is inherently sinful **for believers in the Messiah to eat**. If someone regards some **food** as sinful to eat, then it is **only** sinful for that person to eat it. **15** **Do not tempt fellow believers to sin** because, if you grieve your fellow believer by eating what that person considers to be sinful to eat, you are not acting in a loving manner anymore. Do not cause a fellow believer to **stop trusting in God and** become ruined **eternally** because of what you **want to** eat! The Messiah died to save that person! **16** So then, do not do anything that will cause anyone to slander the good things that God has given you. **17** **Do not do this**, because eating and drinking do not characterize God's kingdom. Rather, being righteous, peaceful, and joyful through the Holy Spirit **characterizes God's kingdom**. **18** Indeed, **any** believer who serves the Messiah by doing these things greatly pleases God, and **other** people will **also** approve of that person.

19 Therefore, we must eagerly try to live peacefully with other believers and help each other become spiritually mature. 20 Do not ruin what God has done because you want to eat certain foods! God permits us to eat all kinds of food. However, it is sinful for someone to eat certain foods if doing so tempts your fellow believer to sin. 21 It is better not to eat any meat, or drink any wine, or do anything that could tempt your fellow believer to sin, [or that could offend that person or cause that person to remain spiritually immature]. 22 Keep what you believe that God permits you to do between you and God. The person who does not feel guilty concerning what he believes to be right is blessed. 23 By contrast, God judges someone who considers eating certain foods to be sinful and eats those foods. This is because that person did not act according to what that person believes is right. A person who does anything that is not according to what that person believes is right is sinning.

15 1 Indeed, we spiritually mature believers in the Messiah must support our fellow believers in the Messiah who are spiritually immature. We must not only do what pleases us. 2 Each one of us believers in the Messiah must do what pleases his fellow believers in order to do what is good for them, and in order to help them become spiritually mature. 3 For instance, not even the Messiah Jesus pleased himself! Rather, he lived to please others. This is what David meant when he wrote in the Scriptures about the Messiah saying to God, "When people insult you, they also insult me!" 4 Indeed, the prophets previously wrote everything in the Scriptures in order to teach us. They also wrote the Scriptures in order to make us confident through what the Scriptures say that helps us endure and encourages us.

5 I pray that our patient and encouraging God will allow you to live harmoniously with each other the way the Messiah Jesus did. 6 I pray that you will live harmoniously with each other in order that you might be united when you glorify God. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

7 Consequently, welcome your fellow believers in the Messiah in the same way that the Messiah Jesus also welcomed you in order to glorify God! 8 Indeed, I, Paul, am telling you that the Messiah Jesus serves the circumcised Jews because of how trustworthy God is. He did this in order to secure what God had promised to the Jewish forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 9 Jesus also did this in order for the nations to glorify God because he is so merciful. This is

what David meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, “So I will proclaim who you are when I am among the nations, and I will praise you by singing songs.” **10** Again, Moses said in the Scriptures, “All you nations, celebrate along with God’s people!” **11** And also in the Scriptures someone said, “All you nations, praise the Lord! All you people groups, commend him!” **12** The Prophet Isaiah also said in the Scriptures, “The one who descends from David’s father Jesse will come. He will begin to rule over the nations. The nations will become confident because of him.”

13 I pray that the God who makes people confident will cause you to feel exceedingly joyful and peaceful by trusting in him! I pray that God will do this in order for you to be exceedingly confident by the Holy Spirit enabling you.

14 My fellow believers, God has also persuaded me personally that each of you are exceedingly good, exceedingly knowledgeable of many things, and even able to teach other people. **15** In this letter I have written to you believers in the Messiah in a bold manner about some things in order to remind you of them. I have done this because God has kindly authorized me to do so. **16** God did this in order for me to serve the Messiah Jesus among non-Jewish people by preaching the good news from God as if I were a priest. I do this in order for the non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus to be like something offered to God that pleases him, and that the Holy Spirit has set apart for him.

17 So, as someone who is united with the Messiah Jesus, I have good reasons to boast about what God is doing through me! **18** Indeed, I will only be so bold as to speak about what the Messiah has done through me that has led to the nations obediently trusting in God’s good news! The Messiah did this through what I said and did. **19** The Messiah also did this through powerful and wonderful miracles as God’s Holy Spirit powerfully enabled me! As a result, I have completed proclaiming the good news about the Messiah all the way around from Jerusalem to the province of Illyricum. **20** And so, I aspire to preach the good news where people have never heard about the Messiah Jesus. I desire this in order to not interfere with someone else’s work, as if I were building something where another person had already laid the foundation. **21** Rather, I preach the good news to those who have never heard it. This is what Isaiah meant when he wrote in the Scriptures, “Those people whom no one told about him will perceive who he is. Those people who have not heard about him will comprehend who he is.”

22 That also hindered me over and over again from visiting all of you at Rome. 23 Yet at
the present time I have nowhere left to go in these areas to proclaim the good news. I also have
deeply desired to visit you for many years. 24 So whenever I go to the province of Spain, I truly
expect to visit you while passing through Rome. I also expect you to help me continue my
journey to Spain after I first enjoy being with you for some time. 25 Yet, at the present time I
am going to Jerusalem in order to serve God's people there. 26 I am doing this because the
believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia were glad to give money to help the poor
people of God who live in Jerusalem. 27 In fact, those believers were glad, and they should
help the poor believers in Jerusalem. This is because the non-Jewish believers have spiritually
benefited from the Jewish believers. So, the non-Jewish believers should also serve the Jewish
believers by providing what they physically need. 28 So then, after I finish this task and safely
deliver this money to the poor believers in Jerusalem, I will pass through your city on my way
to Spain. 29 I am certain that the Messiah will fully bless us when I visit you!

30 Fellow believers, I appeal to you based on our Lord Jesus the Messiah and how the Holy
Spirit has enabled us to love each other: Fervently pray to God with me and for me! 31 Pray
that God will rescue me from the Jews in the province of Judea who do not believe in Jesus.
Pray also that God's people in Jerusalem will accept the money that I give them for the poor
believers there. 32 Pray also that I can joyfully visit you as God wants, and we may refresh
each other. 33 Finally, I pray that the God who makes us peaceful will be with all of you. May
it be so!

16 1 I, Paul, recommend to you our fellow believer whose name is Phoebe. She also
serves the group of believers that meets in the city of Cenchrea. 2 I recommend Phoebe to you
in order for you to accept her as a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus. Accept her in a way that is
appropriate for God's people. I also recommend her to you in order for you to help her in
whatever way and with anything she might need from you. Do this because she has helped
many people, including me personally.

3 Say hello to Priscilla and her husband Aquila. They have worked with me to tell people
about the Messiah Jesus. 4 They risked the Romans executing them in order to save my life.
Both I and all the groups of believers among the nations are thankful for them. 5 Also, say

hello to the group of believers that meets in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Say hello to Epaenetus, whom I love. He is the first person from the province of Asia Minor to believe in the Messiah Jesus. **6** Say hello to Mary. She has labored a lot for your sake. **7** Say hello to Andronicus and Junia. They are my fellow Jews, and we were in prison together. Those whom Jesus sent to represent him know them very well. God united them to the Messiah before he did so to me. **8** Say hello to Ampliatus. I love him as a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus. **9** Say hello to Urbanus. He works with us to tell people about the Messiah Jesus. Also say hello to Stachys, whom I love. **10** Say hello to Apelles. The Messiah Jesus has approved him. Say hello to those believers who live in the household of Aristobulus. **11** Say hello to my fellow Jew Herodion. Say hello to those whom God united to the Lord Jesus who live in the household of Narcissus. **12** Say hello to Tryphaena and Tryphosa. These ladies labor to tell people about the Lord Jesus. Say hello to Persis, whom I love. She has labored a lot to tell people about the Lord Jesus. **13** Say hello to Rufus. The Lord Jesus chose him. Also say hello to his mother. She has been like a mother to me as well. **14** Say hello to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and our fellow believers who meet together with them. **15** Say hello to Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas. Also say hello to all God's people who meet together with them. **16** Say hello to each other in a loving way. All of the groups of believers who belong to the Messiah in this area say hello to you!

17 My fellow believers, I exhort you to look out for the people who are causing believers to argue with each other and tempting them to sin, which contradicts what we have taught you. Stay away from them! **18** Indeed, people like this are not serving our Lord Jesus the Messiah! Rather, they only serve their own appetites. By speaking so eloquently and flatteringly, they trick the minds of people who do not suspect them of teaching what is false. **19** I tell you these things because believers in many places have heard about how you obey God. As a result, I am overjoyed because of you! But I also desire that you act wisely with regard to what is good and remain innocent with regard to what is bad. **20** The God who makes us peaceful will quickly make you victorious over Satan, as if you were tramplinghim under your feet! I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will be gracious to you!

21 Timothy, who works with me to tell people about Jesus, says hello to you. My fellow Jews, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, also say hello to you. **22** I am Tertius, and I am writing this

letter as Paul dictates it to me. I say hello to you as a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus. **23** Gaius says hello to you. He hosts me and the whole group of believers who meet here. Erastus controls the money for this city. He and Quartus, our fellow believer, say hello to you. **24** 18 [I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will be gracious to all of you! May it be so!]

25 I pray that everyone will glorify God. He is the one who can strengthen you spiritually based on the good news that I proclaim about Jesus the Messiah. What I proclaim is based on the mysterious plan that God revealed but previously concealed from people for a very long time. **26** However, now God has revealed that mysterious plan. He has made it known through his prophets who wrote about it in the Scriptures. They did this according to what the God who lives forever commanded in order that all the nations would obey God by trusting in Jesus the Messiah. **27** God alone is wise. I pray that everyone will glorify him through Jesus the Messiah forever! May it be so!

1 Corinthians

1 **1** I, Paul, write this letter to you, and Sosthenes our fellow believer is with me. God chose to send me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. **2** I send this letter to you who are part of the groups of believers belonging to God, which are in the city of Corinth. God has set you apart for himself by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus, and he has chosen you to be his own people. You are part of the group of believers who worship our Lord Jesus the Messiah in many countries and cities. Jesus the Messiah is their Lord and our Lord. **3** May God, who is our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

4 I often thank my God about you. I do this because I know how God is acting kindly towards you by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus. **5** When I say that God has acted kindly towards you, I mean that he has abundantly blessed you by uniting you to the Messiah in every area of your lives, including whatever you say and whatever you know. **6** God has blessed you because he has proved to you that what we told you about the Messiah was true. **7** God has done these things for you so that you are completely equipped spiritually during this time when you confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return. **8** Just as he proved our message to be true, God will also prove your trust in the Messiah true until your earthly lives end. Because of this, he will judge you not guilty when our Lord Jesus the Messiah returns to earth. **9** God always does what he promises, and he is the one who has specially chosen you to share everything with his Son, Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.

10 My fellow believers, as one whom our Lord Jesus the Messiah has authorized, I appeal to you, asking that all of you agree with one another. I ask that you do not split up into rival groups but that you reconcile with each other by agreeing in what you think and by agreeing in what you decide to do. **11** I appeal to you because some members of Chloe's household have talked to me about you, my fellow believers. They said that you quarrel among yourselves. **12** What I am talking about is how many of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos' group, or that you belong to Cephas' group, or that

you belong to the Messiah's group. 13 No one has split the Messiah into pieces, so you also should not split into pieces. No one crucified Paul in your behalf, and no one baptized you so that you belong to Paul. 14 I give thanks to God that I baptized no people who belong to your group except for two individuals: Crispus and Gaius. 15 Because I baptized so few of you, no person is able to claim that I baptized you, so that you belong to my group. 16 Oh yes, I remember that I also baptized those who live in the house of Stephanas. Other than that, I do not think that I baptized any other people in your group. 17 The reason I baptized so few of you is that the Messiah did not commission me to baptize people. Rather, he commissioned me to proclaim the good news. I do this without using words that are wise by human standards. That way, I do not destroy the power of the message about the Messiah dying on the cross.

18 I do not use wise words, because the message that I proclaim about the death of the Messiah on the cross sounds foolish to people who are bringing destruction on themselves. However, God works powerfully in this message for us whom he is rescuing. 19 You can tell that this is true, because the prophet Isaiah wrote,

> "I will render useless the wise things that wise people think,
> and I will make the intelligent things that intelligent people think worthless."

20 So then, wise people are not really wise, and experts are not really experts, and people who are good at arguing are not really good at it, as they all belong to the current world system. In fact, God has shown that what seems to be wise in this current world is not wise at all. 21 Here is how God has done this. Just as God wisely chose, unbelievers did not get to know God by means of their wise thinking. So, God decided to rescue those who have faith in the Messiah by means of the foolish message that believers proclaim. 22 On the one hand, many Jewish people want to see powerful deeds. On the other hand, many Greek people search for wise thinking. 23 We, however, proclaim that the Messiah died on a cross. Many Jewish people find this message offensive, and many non-Jewish people think that this message is foolish. 24 We, however, whom God has chosen, whether we are Jewish people or Greek people, have learned that God works powerfully and wisely through this message about the Messiah. 25 This is because what God does that seems foolish is wiser than anything that humans do, and what God does that seems weak is stronger than anything that humans do.

26 For proof that this is so, think about the fact that God chose you the way you are, fellow believers. From a human perspective, most of you did not think wisely, do powerful deeds, or belong to important families. **27** Rather, God decided to use what seems foolish to humans to humble those who think wisely. God decided to use what seems weak to humans to humble those people and things that act powerfully. **28** God decided to use what seems unimportant to people and what people look down on. It is as if these things do not even exist, but God decided to use them to make the things that everyone knows about insignificant. **29** God did these things with the goal that no humans would say great things about themselves in God's sight. **30** It is God who has united you to the Messiah Jesus. By working through the Messiah, God has made us wise. He has declared us innocent, chosen us to be his own people, and delivered us from evil powers. **31** So, because God is the one who does all these things, we should do what the prophet Jeremiah wrote:

> "If people want to say great things about something, they should say those great things about the Lord."

2 **1** My fellow believers, I also acted according to this pattern when I visited you and told you about what God has now revealed to us. I did not speak in more powerful ways than others do. I did not argue in wiser ways than others do. **2** I did this because I chose to speak and act as if the only things I understood while I was with you were Jesus the Messiah and how he died on the cross. **3** I also lived according to this pattern when I was staying with you. I was sick, I was afraid, and I frequently shivered and shook. **4** I did not speak wisely and persuasively according to human standards when I talked to you and shared my message with you. Instead, I proved that God's Spirit works powerfully through me when I shared my message. **5** I shared my message in this way in order that you might trust in God because he acts powerfully, not because humans spoke wise words to you.

6 Despite what I have said, we who proclaim the good news do speak wisely when we are with spiritually mature people. However, people who think only in human ways and people who rule right now do not think that we speak wisely. Soon, these people will no longer rule. **7** No, we speak wisely because we proclaim the things that God has revealed to us. God concealed these things until now, although he had already decided to do them before he created

anything. He has done all of this so that he might honor us. **8** The people who rule right now did not know about these wise things. You can tell that they did not know, because they killed our glorious Lord on the cross. **9** Rather, how they acted fits with what the prophet Isaiah wrote:

> "God has ready for the people who love him
> things that no one witnessed before
> and things that no one heard about before
> and things that no human even imagined before."

10 God has made these things known to us by the power of God's Spirit. God works by the power of his Spirit because God's Spirit explores all people and things. He even explores things about God that are very difficult to understand. **11** You can tell that God's Spirit explores everything about God, because everyone knows that only each human being understands everything about himself or herself. In the same way, only God's Spirit understands everything about God. **12** We did indeed receive the Spirit who comes from God. We did not receive a spirit that belongs to the current world. We received God's Spirit in order that we might understand everything that God has done for us. **13** These are the very things that we also talk about. We do not use words that humans wisely teach. Instead, we use words that the Spirit teaches, so that we explain spiritual truths with spiritual words. **14** Now, people who do not have God's Spirit reject the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches. They reject these things, because they think that they are foolish. They cannot know about the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches, because only people who have God's Spirit can judge rightly about them. **15** On the other hand, people who have God's Spirit can judge rightly about everything. However, no other person can judge rightly about them. **16** This fits with what the scripture says:

> "No human knows what the Lord is thinking.
> No human can teach him about anything."

We, however, can think the same things that the Messiah is thinking.

3 **1** My fellow believers, when I visited you, I was unable to teach you in the way I would teach people who have God's Spirit. Rather, I had to teach you in the way I would teach people

who think only in human ways. I had to do this because you believed in the Messiah in an immature way. 2 I taught you about things that are simple. I did not teach about things that are complex. I did this because you were not ready for complex teachings. In fact, you are still not ready for complex teachings. 3 I know that you are not ready for complex teachings, because you are still people who think only in human ways. Some of you are jealous of each other, and some of you are fighting with each other. When you do these things, it proves that you are people who think only in human ways and who act only in human ways. 4 Further, some of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos's group. When you make claims like these, it proves that you are thinking and acting only in human ways.

5 You need to realize that Apollos and I, Paul, are just people who serve the Messiah. Each of us does what the Lord has assigned us to do. When we told you about the Messiah, you trusted in him, not in us. 6 God assigned me to proclaim the good news to you first. I was like someone who plants seeds. God assigned Apollos to proclaim even more about the good news to you. He was like someone who waters the seeds so that they grow. However, God himself enabled you to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is the one who makes the plants grow. 7 You can see that the person who first proclaims the good news to people is not important. The person who proclaims even more about the good news to people is not important. These people are like those who plant the seeds and those who water the plants, since they too are not important. Instead, it is God who is important, because he enables people to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is important because he causes the plants to grow. 8 In fact, the person who first proclaims the good news to people and the person who proclaims more about the good news to people have the same goal. They are like the person who plants the seeds and the person who waters the plants, who also have the same goal. God will reward people who do either task. He will reward them in a way that is appropriate for what they did. 9 We who proclaim the good news all work for God, but you belong to God. It is as if you were farmland that God owns, in which we planted and watered seeds. Indeed, it is as if you were a house that God owns.

10 God gave me the skills to wisely proclaim the good news to you first. I am like the construction boss who puts a foundation in the ground before building a house. Others, such as Apollos, proclaim more about the good news to you. They are like other builders who construct a house on top of that foundation. In the end, all the people who proclaim more about the good

news should make sure that they proclaim it correctly. They should be like builders who construct a house the right way on top of a foundation. **11** No one can put a foundation in the ground if another person has already put it in the ground. So also, no one else can first proclaim the good news to you, because I already did that. What I proclaimed to you is **what** Jesus the Messiah **accomplished**. This message about Jesus is like the foundation of a house. **12** Builders can use many different building materials when they construct a house on its foundation. They can use **more durable materials like** gold, silver, and jewels, **and less durable materials like** lumber, grass, and straw. In the same way, some of those who proclaim more about the good news teach things that are more pleasing to God. Others teach things that are less pleasing to God. **13** On the day when the Messiah returns to judge everyone, he will reveal what kind of work each person has done. The quality of the materials that builders use to construct a building becomes clear when the building catches on fire. In a similar way, a judgment like fire will occur on the day when the Messiah returns. This judgment will show the quality of what those who proclaim more about the gospel have taught. **14** Any builders who constructed a building that survives a fire gain honor and money. In the same way, God will honor and reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God accepts when he judges everyone. **15** Any builders who constructed a building that fire consumes lose respect and money. However, the builders do not die in the fire, but they escape from the flames. In the same way, when he judges everyone, God will not honor or reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God does not accept. However, God will still accept these teachers despite the wrong things that they have taught.

16 You need to remember that you are like God's temple in Jerusalem **because God is present among you like he was present in the temple**. You need to remember that you are like a house in which God's Spirit lives **because he is always present with you**. **17** God will act against any person who acts against his temple. This is because God's temple belongs to him alone. **Since** you are like God's temple**, God will act against any person who acts against you**.

18 Do not believe what is not true about yourselves. You who consider yourselves to be wise according to human standards should become foolish **according to human standards**. In this way, you will **really** become wise people. **19** **I speak these words** because the things that humans consider to be wise are things that God considers to be foolish. **You know that this is true** because the author of the book of Job wrote,

> “God is the one who disrupts the clever schemes that wise people plan.”

20 Further, the author of a psalm wrote,

> “The Lord is aware of everything that wise people plan, and he knows that these plans will not succeed.”

21 Therefore, none of you should boast about how you follow other humans. I say this because you have everything, so boasting about following other humans is foolish. **22** You have leaders such as Paul, Apollos, and Peter. You have everything that God made, you do not fear when you live, and you can find comfort when you die. You have everything that exists now and everything that will exist in the future. Indeed, you have everything. **23** Further, the Messiah has you, and God has the Messiah.

4 **1** I want people to think of us who proclaim the good news as those who serve the Messiah and who are in charge of proclaiming what God has now revealed to us. **2** Whenever a leader puts another person in charge, the leader requires that person to do his or her tasks faithfully. In the same way, God requires that we who proclaim the good news do our task faithfully. **3** I do not worry about what you or any other human authority decides about whether I have acted faithfully or not. In fact, I do not even worry about what I myself decide about whether I have acted faithfully or not. **4** In fact, I do not know about anything I have done wrong. However, what I know about myself does not prove that I have acted faithfully. Rather, it is the Lord who will decide whether I have acted faithfully or not. **5** So then, you should not finally decide about anything until the Lord comes back to judge everyone and everything. He will make clear what is now hidden, and he will show everyone what each person desires and plans. At that time, God will praise each person who has acted faithfully.

6 My fellow believers, I have talked in this way about myself and Apollos for your benefit. I want you to learn from our example that you should act only in ways that fit with what the authors of the Scriptures wrote. Then, nobody will speak great things about one leader and bad things about another leader. **7** Nobody has set you apart from every other believer. In fact, God has given to you every good thing that you have. Since these things are gifts from God, you should not say proudly that you yourself earned them.

8 You are acting as if you currently have everything that you need spiritually. You are acting as if you currently have more spiritual blessings than you need. You are acting as if you have currently begun to rule with Christ, even though we who proclaim the good news are not ruling with Christ now. Indeed, I wish that you really were ruling with him, in order that we who proclaim the good news could be ruling with you. **9** Rather than thinking that we rule with Christ now, I consider us apostles to be those whom God has appointed to suffer humiliation and to die. We suffer humiliation and die publicly, and everything that God has created, including spiritual beings and humans, can see us. **10** We seem to be foolish people because we serve the Messiah, but you think that you are wise people because God unites you to the Messiah. We seem to be people who do not have power or influence, but you think that you do have these things. You think that people praise you, but those people shame us. **11** Even now as I write this letter to you, we whom Christ has sent have often not had enough food or drink. We wear ragged clothing, and others repeatedly strike us. We constantly travel and do not return to a home. **12** We do manual labor to earn a living. When people speak badly to us, we say good things about them. When people hurt us because we serve the Messiah, we patiently live through it. **13** When people say bad things about us, we say encouraging words to them. From a human perspective, we are worthless, like filthy garbage that someone should throw away. All these things are true about us even now as I write this letter to you.

14 I do not include in my letter what I have just finished saying because I want to make you ashamed. Rather, I include these things because I want to admonish you, since you are like my own children, whom I love. **15** When I first preached the good news to you, and God united you to Jesus the Messiah, I became your spiritual father. So, even if you had a million teachers who helped you to live in union with the Messiah, I would still be the only spiritual father you have. **16** Because I am your spiritual father, I plead with you to imitate how I live. **17** Because I want you to imitate me, I had Timothy visit you. He is like my own child, and I love him. He faithfully serves the Messiah as one whom God has united to the Lord. He will teach you again about how I behave as one whom God has united to the Messiah Jesus. I instruct every church in every place that I visit to behave in these ways.

18 Some of you are saying great things about yourselves. These people act as if I were not about to visit you. **19** However, I will visit you very soon, as long as the Lord wants me to do so. I already know what these people who say great things about themselves claim. When I visit

you, I will learn whether they are actually powerful or not. 20 I will do this because God's kingdom functions by God working powerfully through people, not by people saying great things. 21 When you choose how you will respond to what I am saying, you are also choosing how I will act when I visit. When I visit you, I can either harshly discipline you because you did not listen, or I can act gently and lovingly because you did listen.

5 1 I have learned that you are in fact allowing people from your group to have improper sex. Even those who do not worship God do not allow some of the things that you allow. The worst thing that I have learned is that a man from your group is having sex with his stepmother. 2 Despite this, you still say great things about yourselves instead of lamenting that sin. You should have lamented with the goal of expelling the man who committed this sexual sin. 3 You should expel him because I have already declared the man who did this evil thing to be guilty. Although I am not with you physically, I think about you and care about you. Therefore, when I declare this man to be guilty, it is as valid as if I were with you. 4 When you gather together, and I am thinking of you, we represent our Lord Jesus the Messiah. When you gather in this way, you should punish this man as our Lord Jesus authorizes you to do. 5 You should expel this man so that Satan rules over him. That will destroy his sinful parts, and then God will save him when the Lord returns.

6 Saying great things about yourselves is not the right thing to do. Surely you realize that one person doing evil things is like fermented dough. Even a little fermented dough makes a whole lump of dough fermented, and even one person doing evil things makes the whole church guilty. 7 Just as Jews remove the yeast from their houses during the Passover festival, so you should remove anyone who does evil things from your group. Then, you will be free of sin, just like fresh, unleavened dough is free of yeast. In fact, you live in a time that is like the festival of Passover. This is because the Messiah has died for you, just like the lamb that Jews sacrifice during the Passover festival represents how God delivered them. 8 Since the Messiah has died for us, let us act as if we were participating in the festival of Passover and remove the old leaven. We should get rid of the leaven, which stands for doing what is evil and wicked. Instead, we should eat unfermented bread, which stands for doing what is honest and trustworthy.

9 In the letter that I sent to you before this one, I told you not to keep company with people
who act in sexually improper ways. 10 I did not mean that you should entirely disassociate with
unbelieving people who act in sexually immoral ways, or with people who want more than
they need or who cheat others, or with people who worship false gods. To avoid these kinds of
people, you would need to get away from the entire world. That is not what I have commanded
you to do. 11 Now, in this letter, I am telling you not to keep company with any person whom
you call a fellow believer who is acting sinfully. This includes having improper sex, wanting
more than one needs, worshiping other gods, abusing others with words, getting drunk, and
cheating others. Do not have meals with a person who does any of these things. 12 I want you
to act in this way only with fellow believers, because you and I do not need to decide whether
someone who is not part of our group is guilty or innocent. Rather, you need to focus on
deciding whether people who are part of your group are guilty or innocent. 13 Do not worry
about people who are not part of your group because God is the one who decides whether they
are guilty or innocent. You should focus on people who are part of your group because the
scripture says,

"You must get rid of any evil person who is part of your group!"

6 1 When someone from your group quarrels with another person from your group, you
should never settle the quarrel in a public court in front of people who do not believe. Rather,
you should settle the quarrel in private among the people whom God has set apart for himself.
2 Surely you know that the people whom God has set apart for himself will decide whether all
things and people that God has created are guilty or innocent. Since you will decide whether all
these things and people are guilty or innocent, you can surely decide about small quarrels
within your group. 3 You need to realize that we will decide whether angels are innocent or
guilty. Since we will do that, we are certainly able to decide about disputes related to our current
lives. 4 Therefore, whenever you quarrel with one another concerning your current lives, you
should not choose people who are not part of your group of believers to decide who is guilty or
innocent. 5 I include what I have just said in order to make you feel ashamed. Surely there are
people in your group who are wise enough to be able to decide about disputes among fellow
believers. 6 But instead, some believers among you accuse other believers in a legal court, and
people who do not believe settle the dispute.

7 Because you have disputes with each other, you have already completely failed to follow Jesus. Rather than failing in this way, you should instead forgive fellow believers when they harm or defraud you. 8 Rather than forgiving others, however, you have harmed and defrauded other people. In fact, you have done these things to fellow believers!

9 I am shocked that you do these things even though you realize that people who harm others will not participate in God's kingdom. Do not believe anyone who tells you something else. Anyone who has improper sex or who worships other gods or who has sex with a married person or who participates in sexual acts with a person of the same gender or who initiates sexual acts with a person of the same gender 10 or who steals from others or who wants more than he or she needs or who gets drunk or who abuses others with words or who cheats others will not participate in God's kingdom. 11 Some of you used to behave in these ways. However, now God has cleansed you, he has made you holy, and he has declared you to be innocent. You experience these things because the Lord Jesus the Messiah and the Holy Spirit work powerfully to give them to you.

12 Some of you say, "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, I say that some things are not helpful to anybody. Again, some of you say, "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, I say that I will not serve anything that will make me its slave. 13 Some of you say, "Food exists for a person's stomach to digest it, and a person's stomach exists to digest food." Indeed, I also say that God will make food and stomachs unimportant. While it is true that food exists for a person's stomach, the human body does not exist for a person to have improper sex with it. Instead, the human body exists to serve the Lord, and the Lord has worked to save the human body. 14 In fact, God made the Lord alive again, and he will work powerfully to make us also alive again.

15 Surely you know that your bodies belong to the Messiah, just as if you were his body parts. Because of that, you should not take your body back and then give it to a prostitute, so that your body belongs to her, just as if you were her body parts. Never do that! 16 Surely you know that a man who has sex with a prostitute unites himself to her as closely as if they shared the same body. You should know this because the scripture says, "The man and the woman, although two people, will become like one person." 17 In a similar way, any people who unite themselves to the Lord become spiritually one with the Lord.

18 Intentionally avoid having improper sex. When people sin, they usually do so without directly hurting their bodies. However, when people have improper sex, they do hurt their own bodies. 19 Surely you know that God has given the Holy Spirit to you. Therefore, your bodies are like temples for the Holy Spirit, since he unites himself to you like how a god unites himself to his temple. Because of that, you do not belong to yourselves. 20 Rather, you belong to God, since the Messiah died for you. When he died for you, it was as if God paid money to buy you. Because you belong to God, you must honor him whenever you do anything with your body.

7 1 Moving on to what you asked me about, in your letter you said that it is appropriate for people not to have sex with each other. 2 On the other hand, people often desire to have sex, even improper sex. Because of that, a husband should stay married to his own wife, and a wife should stay married to her own husband. 3 Husbands should regularly have sex with their wives. Similarly, wives should regularly have sex with their husbands. 4 Wives' bodies belong to their husbands, not to themselves. Similarly, husbands' bodies belong to their wives, not to themselves. 5 You should only stop having sex regularly when both of you agree to do so for a brief time. You should only do this when you want to focus on praying to God, and you should soon resume having sex regularly. If you do not do this quickly, Satan will use how you desire to have sex to entice you to do what is wrong.

6 I do not command you to stop having sex regularly in order to focus on praying. Rather, I am only allowing you to do so. 7 If it were up to me, all people would be like me and remain unmarried. However, God gives each person his or her own way to live. Some people live in one way, while other people live in another way.

8 Here I am speaking to people who have not married and to women whose husbands have died. The best thing for these people is to stay unmarried like I do. 9 However, some people will struggle to control how they desire to have sex. These people should get married, because that is a better choice than constantly desiring to have sex.

10 Here I am speaking what the Lord himself said to people who have gotten married. I require the wives to stay with their husbands. 11 Now whenever they do not stay with their husbands, they should not marry again, or they should go back to their husbands. Further, husbands should stay with their wives.

12 Now to the rest of you who have a spouse who is not a believer, the Lord did not speak
about this, so I am speaking what I myself command. Some fellow believers have unbelieving
wives, and the wives may wish to stay with their believing husbands. In this situation, the
husbands should stay with their wives. 13 Similarly, some fellow believers have unbelieving
husbands, and the husbands may wish to stay with their believing wives. In this situation, the
wives should stay with their husbands. 14 You should remain with an unbelieving husband or
wife, because God considers the unbelieving husband to be an acceptable spouse for the
believing wife. Similarly, God considers the unbelieving wife to be an acceptable spouse for
the believing husband. Because of this, God treats the children in this situation just like he
treats the children of two believing parents. If what I have said were not true, God would treat
the children in this situation just like he treats the children of two unbelieving parents.

15 On the other hand, some unbelieving husbands or wives may want to leave their
believing spouses. In this situation, the believing spouses should allow them to leave. The
believing spouses do not have to stay with their unbelieving husbands or wives. In any situation
like this, remember that God requires us to be peaceful people. 16 You should allow an
unbelieving spouse to leave because each wife does not know whether she can help her husband
to believe in Jesus. Each husband also does not know whether he can help his wife to believe
in Jesus.

17 In general, all people need to behave in ways that fit with what the Lord has appointed
them to do and with how God requires them to act. I require people to follow this teaching in
every group of believers that I visit. 18 There are some people whom others circumcised before
they believed in Jesus. These people should not try to become uncircumcised again. There are
other people whom others did not circumcise before they believed in Jesus. These people
should not try to become circumcised. 19 Whether a person has had someone circumcise them
or not does not matter to us or to God. On the other hand, doing what God requires of us does
matter to us and to God. 20 All people should serve God faithfully while doing the normal
things they were already doing when God changed them. 21 Some people were slaves when
they believed in Jesus. These people should not worry about being slaves. On the other hand,
they should make use of any chance they have to become free. 22 Do not worry about your
social position, because the Lord considers all people who were slaves when they believed in
him to be free people now. Similarly, the Messiah considers all people who were free people

when they believed in him to be his slaves now. 23 When Jesus died for you, it was as if God paid money to buy you. Because of that, you should not serve other humans, but only God.
24 My fellow believers, all people should serve God faithfully while doing the normal things they were already doing when God changed them.

25 I am now moving on to speak about those who have not gotten married. On this issue, I do not have anything that the Lord said to tell you. However, I will tell you what I think is best. I do this because God has acted kindly towards me by making me a trustworthy teacher.
26 What I suggest is that people should not change how they are living. I say this because I know that dangerous things are going to happen soon. 27 Some people have gotten engaged. They should not separate. Other people have never gotten engaged. They should not try to become engaged. 28 However, a single man or woman who gets married does not sin. I only advise you against getting married because people who get married will experience troubles while they live.

29 My fellow believers, what I am about to tell you is important. The end times are not far away. Therefore, until then, each man who has a wife should live like a man who does not have a wife. 30 Each person who cries should live like a person who does not cry. Each person who is glad should live like a person who is not glad. Each person who acquires anything should live like a person who does not own anything. 31 Each person who utilizes worldly things should live like a person who does not utilize these things. You should act in these ways because God will soon abolish the worldly way of doing things.

32 I want you to care about few things. Single men care about what they can do to serve the Lord. 33 On the other hand, married men care about worldly things, particularly how they can serve their wives. Because of this, they care about two different things: serving their wives and serving the Lord. Single women and women who have never gotten married 34 care about what they can do to serve the Lord. Their goal is to be completely holy. On the other hand, married women care about worldly things, particularly how they can serve their husbands. 35 I have said these things because I think they are helpful for you. I do not want to force you into acting in only one way. Rather, I want you to be able to act honorably and serve the Lord well and attentively.

36 In some cases, an engaged man may consider that he might act in sexually improper ways with his fiancée. Further, his fiancée may be fully mature and ready to have sex. In these cases, here is what to do: the man should marry his fiancé. He does not sin when he does this, and the two of them should get married. 37 In other cases, an engaged man may have made up his mind, and no person or thing has forced him not to marry. He can control what he desires, and he has decided for himself not to marry. In this case, he can rightly choose not to marry his fiancée. 38 In the end, any man who gets married to his fiancée does a good thing. Further, any man who does not get married to his fiancée does a better thing.

39 Wives must stay married to their husbands unless their husbands die. Then, they may marry any believing man whom they want to marry. 40 However, I think that any woman whose husband has died will be more blessed if she does not marry again. While that is my opinion, I think that God's Spirit speaks through me.

8 1 I am now moving on to speak about meat that someone has offered to another god. All of us who believe do know what is true about other gods. However, knowing what is true often makes people proud. It is loving others that really helps other believers. 2 All people who reckon that they understand something do not yet understand it in the way that they should understand it. 3 However, God understands and cares for all people who love him.

4 Now I will go back to speaking about whether to eat meat that someone has offered to another god. We who believe in God understand that other gods do not really exist. In fact, we understand that the only god is the one God. 5 It is true that there are many things that are in heaven or on earth that people call "gods." In this way, many "gods" and "lords" exist.
6 However, we who believe acknowledge one God, who is the Father. He created everything, and we exist to honor him. We also acknowledge one Lord, who is Jesus the Messiah. He created everything with the Father, and we exist by means of what he does for us.

7 However, some people do not fully understand what I have said. They used to worship other gods in the past, and they incompletely understand what is right and wrong. When they eat meat that someone has offered to another god, they feel guilty. 8 Now food does not connect us with God. Those who do not eat certain foods do not miss out on anything from God. Also, those who do eat certain foods do not receive something extra from God. 9 However, you

need to be careful about how you live if you know that food is not significant. How you live should not cause someone who incompletely understands what is right and wrong to struggle to follow Jesus. 10 You need to be careful because fellow believers might observe a believer who knows what is true about other gods sitting down to eat meat in another god's temple. Those fellow believers, who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, will become confident that they also can eat meat that someone has offered to another god. 11 As a result, by acting based on what you know is true about other gods, you harm others who incompletely understand what is right and wrong. These are fellow believers, and the Messiah died for them. 12 When you act in these ways, you sin against fellow believers by leading them, who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, to do what they think is wrong. When do you this, you sin against the Messiah too. 13 Consequently, in cases where what I eat would lead a fellow believer to sin, I will never ever eat meat again, whether someone has offered it to another god or not. This way, I do not lead any of my fellow believers to sin.

9 1 I am not bound to eat only certain foods. Our Lord Jesus sent me to represent him, and I have seen him with my own eyes. God has united us to the Lord, and I have worked hard for you because of that. 2 Other people may not think that the Messiah sent me to represent him, but you do know that. You know that because you proved that the Messiah sent me when God united you to the Lord.

3 I will now defend myself against anyone who wants to question whether the Messiah sent me to represent him or not. 4 Barnabas and I certainly can require you to send us food and drink. 5 We certainly can travel around with a wife who believes in the Messiah. This is what the others whom the Messiah has sent to represent him do, including Peter and the Lord's brothers. 6 It is not true that Barnabas and I are the only ones who represent the Messiah who must work to support ourselves. 7 No soldiers ever pay with their own money to serve in the army. No farmers plant vines and then do not eat what the vines produce. No shepherds take care of sheep and then do not drink the milk that they produce.

8 What I am arguing does not depend on merely human thinking. Rather, you can read what I am arguing in the law of Moses. 9 Here is what Moses wrote in the law of Moses: "You should not keep an ox from eating the grain when it is helping you separate grain from chaff."

God is not primarily interested in oxen, however. 10 Rather, God speaks mostly about us in this law. God had Moses write this command for us because any person who plows a field should expect to receive some of the crop. Any person who separates the grain from the wheat stalks should also expect to receive some of the crop. 11 We proclaimed the good news to you as if we were planting spiritual seeds. Because of that, it would be normal for us to receive financial help from you as if we were receiving some of the crop that grew from the seed that we planted. 12 Other people have received financial support from you. Barnabas and I deserve even more to receive it from you.

However, we have not asked for any support from you. Rather, we choose to go without things so that we will not keep the good news about the Messiah from spreading. 13 Surely you know that the people who perform their duties in the temple eat some of the food that people offer in the temple. More specifically, the priests who offer sacrifices on the altar receive part of what people bring to them to offer on the altar. 14 Similarly, the Lord instructed that anyone who preaches the good news should make their living from preaching the good news.

15 However, I have not asked for any of this support from you. Further, I am not now writing to you to ask for support for myself. I would prefer to die rather than to have someone take away what I can boast about. 16 Now I cannot boast about preaching the good news, because God requires me to preach it. Indeed, were I to stop preaching the good news, God would discipline me. 17 God would reward me if I preached the good news because I myself chose to. However, I have not chosen to do so, for God himself has told me what I need to do. 18 God still rewards me, however. He does so when I preach the good news without requiring people to pay me. I tell people about the good news in this way so that I do not misuse what I am able to require because I preach the good news.

19 Since I preach the good news for free, I do not need to serve any humans. However, I choose to serve all humans so that I can help more of them believe in the Messiah. 20 When I am with Jewish people, I act like a Jewish person. That way, I can help Jewish people believe in the Messiah. When I am with people who think they need to obey Moses' law, I act like someone who thinks that he needs to obey Moses' law. While I myself know that I do not need to obey Moses' law, I act this way so that I can help the people who think they need to obey Moses' law believe in the Messiah. 21 When I am with people who do not obey Moses' law, I

act like someone who does not obey Moses' law. I act this way so that I can help the people who do not obey Moses' law to believe in the Messiah. Of course, I do obey God's law, since I do what the Messiah commanded. 22 When I am with people who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, I act like someone who incompletely understands what is right and wrong. I act this way so that I can help the people who incompletely understand what is right and wrong to believe in the Messiah. As you can see, when I am with any people, I act like they do so that God might work through all the things I do in order to save some of them. 23 As you can see, I act in all these ways because I want people to believe in the good news. Further, I do these things in order that I too will receive what God has promised in the good news.

24 Surely you know that all the runners participate in a race, but in the end only one runner wins the race and takes the reward for winning. When you serve God, it is much like this kind of race. You need to work hard to gain what God has promised to you, just like the runner runs hard to win the race. 25 All athletes carefully control everything that they do so that they can win. They compete for a crown made of leaves that will fall apart. We, however, control ourselves so that we can receive what God has promised to give us, which will last forever.
26 Because of this, I am like a runner who runs straight toward the finish line. I am like a boxer who strikes an opponent without missing. 27 I totally control my body and make it serve me. I do that because I do not want to proclaim the good news to other people but then find that God does not approve of me.

10 1 Now I want to remind you, fellow believers, that our Jewish ancestors all followed God when he appeared to them in a cloud. They all walked through the Red Sea when God made a dry path for them through the water. 2 It was as if someone baptized all of them so that they belonged to Moses. This happened when they followed the cloud and walked through the Red Sea. 3 All of them together ate the special food that God gave them. 4 All of them together drank the special water that God gave them. This happened when they drank the water that came out of the special rock that God provided and that followed them. That water was something that the Messiah gave. 5 However, most of our Jewish ancestors did not please God. You can tell that this is true because they died while they traveled through the desert places.

6 The things that happened to them illustrate how we should act. Through what happened to them, God warns us to avoid doing what is evil, such as the evil things that they did. **7** You should not worship idols, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. **You can tell that they worshiped idols,** because Moses wrote, "The Israelites started eating and drinking and then worshiped other gods in sexually immoral ways." **8** We should not have improper sex, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, 23,000 of them died during one day. **9** We should not challenge the Lord, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, snakes killed them. **10** You should not complain, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, a dangerous spiritual being **whom God sent** killed them.

11 Those things that our ancestors experienced illustrate **how we should act**. In fact, someone wrote down what happened to them so that we can learn from them, since we are the ones who are experiencing the last days. **12** As those stories illustrate, any people who think that they firmly believe **in the Messiah** should make sure that they do not fail **to follow the Messiah**. **13** Other people have experienced the things that tempt you. Further, God will act faithfully. He will not let you experience anything that tempts you if you cannot resist it. Rather, when something tempts you, he will give you what you need to faithfully resist it.

14 Because **of that I have said**, fellow believers whom I love, intentionally avoid worshiping other gods. **15** I am talking this way because I think that you are reasonable people. You should decide for yourselves whether what I am about to say is right or wrong. **16** When we drink the wine that we bless in the Lord's Supper, we together connect ourselves with the Messiah's blood. When we eat the bread, we together connect ourselves with the Messiah's body. **17** We use one loaf of bread **in the Lord's Supper**, and we all together eat pieces of that one loaf. Because we do this, we join ourselves together like we all make up one body.

18 Take the people of Israel as an example. The people who offered something would eat some of what they offered. This means that they connected themselves with the altar**, where the priest would present the rest of what they offered to God**. **19** I am arguing, therefore, that meat that someone has offered to another god and other gods themselves are not powerful or important. **20** However, **you should know** that when those who do not worship God offer sacrifices, they are offering them to evil spiritual beings, not to God. I want you to avoid

connecting yourselves with evil spiritual beings. **21** You cannot drink wine that belongs to the Lord and also wine that belongs to evil spiritual beings. You cannot eat food that belongs to the Lord and also food that belongs to evil spiritual beings. **22** Those who do both of those things should expect the Lord to act jealously against them. Further, we are certainly less powerful than he is.

23 Some of you say, "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, I say that some things are not helpful to anybody. Again, some of you say, "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, I say that some things do not help you grow. **24** Do not work hard to gain what is best for yourselves. Rather, you should work hard to gain what is best for other people. **25** You can eat any food that you buy in the public marketplace. You do not need to find out where it came from so that you know whether it is right or wrong to eat it. **26** You can do this because David wrote, "The earth and everything connected with it belongs to the Lord." **27** At some point, people who do not believe may ask you to eat with them, and you may decide to do so. When this happens, you can eat all the food that they serve you. You do not need to find out where it came from so that you know whether it is right or wrong to eat it. **28** (However, someone might tell you that a person offered the food to a god. In this situation, you should not eat the food. You should act in this way to benefit the person who told you about the food and because of knowing what is right and wrong. **29** By "knowing what is right and wrong," I mean what the other person knows, not what you know.) In general, what another person thinks is right or wrong should not keep me from doing what I am able to do. **30** As long as I am grateful to God when I eat any food, no one should speak badly about me because of something for which I thanked God.

31 To summarize, whenever you eat or drink anything, and indeed whenever you do anything, you should always behave so that you and others honor God. **32** Do not behave in ways that discourage Jewish people, non-Jewish people, or fellow believers from trusting the Messiah. **33** I illustrate how to do this with how I live. I always act in ways that everyone around me accepts. I do not work hard to gain what is best for myself. Rather, I work hard to gain what is best for other people. I do this in order that God will save them.

11 **1** Do what I do, just like I do what Christ did.

2 I commend you because you always think of what I teach and do and because you
carefully believe and do what I taught you to believe and do. 3 I am telling you that each man
comes from the Messiah. A wife comes from her husband. Finally, the Messiah comes from
God. 4 Men might cover their heads when they pray or proclaim what God says. Those who
do this shame the person they come from: the Messiah. 5 Now women might bare their heads
when they pray or proclaim what God says. Those who do this shame the people they come
from: their husbands. You can tell that this is true, because a woman who bares her head is like a
woman whose hair someone has shaved off. 6 In fact, someone should cut short the hair of any
woman who bares her head. Since people shame a woman who has short hair, women should
not bare their heads. 7 Further, on the one hand, men should not cover their heads, because
they represent and honor God. On the other hand, wives honor their husbands. 8 You can tell
that this is true because God did not make the man Adam from the woman Eve. Rather, he
made the woman Eve from the man Adam. 9 Another way that you can tell that this is true is
because God did not make the man Adam for the sake of the woman Eve. Rather, he made the
woman Eve for the sake of the man Adam. 10 Because wives honor their husbands, women
should control what they wear on their heads. They should do this also because of the powerful
spiritual beings.

11 Despite all that, when God unites people to the Messiah, women cannot exist without
men, and men cannot exist without women. 12 In fact, while the woman Eve did come from
the man Adam, men only exist because women give birth to them. However, everything that
exists, including men and women, comes from God. 13 You yourselves should decide whether
women who pray to God without covering their heads act appropriately or not. 14 You can
learn from observing the way things are that it is dishonorable for men to have long hair.
15 However, you can also learn from observing the way things are that it is honorable for women
to have long hair. This is because God has given women their long hair, which functions to
cover their heads. 16 Now if any people consider arguing about what I have said, neither we
nor God's churches allow women to uncover their heads when they pray or prophesy.

17 I am now going to instruct you about another topic, and I cannot commend you in this
area. I cannot commend you, because you harm fellow believers instead of helping them when
you gather as fellow believers. 18 Here is the first thing I will speak about: some people have

told me that you split up into rival groups when you gather as fellow believers to worship God. I believe that this is partly true. **19** I believe it because there need to be disagreements in your group. That way, it may become clear to everyone whom in your group God considers to be acceptable to him. **20** Because of these divisions, you are not actually eating the Lord's Supper when you gather as fellow believers together to eat. **21** During your meals, some people are eating their own food before others receive some. In this way, some people do not have enough to eat, while other people are getting drunk. **22** You act in these ways despite the fact that you can eat food and drink wine in your own houses. Instead, though, you think contemptuously about God's church. In particular, you shame people who have less than you do. You should already know what I will say to you. I am not going to commend you for doing these things. I will definitely not do that!

23 I have already told you what I learned from the Lord about the night when Judas handed the Lord Jesus over to the authorities, who executed him. During that night, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread. **24** He thanked God for the loaf of bread, and then he tore it into pieces so that the disciples could eat it. Then he said, "This bread is my body, which I am offering for your sake. Repeat what I have done so that you remember how I am offering myself for you." **25** Just as he picked up the loaf of bread, he also picked up the cup of wine after they had eaten. He said, "This cup of wine is the new covenant that I am inaugurating with my blood. Repeat what I have done whenever you drink from this cup of wine so that you remember how I am offering myself for you." **26** This means that, until the Lord comes back, whenever you participate in the Lord's Supper by eating this bread and drinking wine from this cup, you announce that the Lord has died.

27 So then, some people, while participating in the Lord's Supper, might eat the bread or drink wine from the cup in a way that dishonors the Messiah. God will hold them responsible for how they have acted against the Lord's body and blood. **28** To avoid that, believers should carefully consider how they are behaving. Then, they can eat the bread and drink wine from the cup. **29** You should carefully consider how you are behaving, because some people eat and drink during the Lord's Supper but do not recognize that God has united fellow believers to the Lord as closely as if they were the Lord's body. How those people eat and drink during the Lord's Supper will result in God punishing them. **30** Because people in your group have acted in that improper way, many of them have gotten sick and some of them have died. **31** So, we believers really

should carefully consider how we are acting **before we participate in the Lord's Supper**. Then, God will not punish us. **32** However, when the Lord does punish us, he does it to train us. That way, God does not include us when he declares everyone who does not believe in the Messiah to be guilty.

33 In conclusion, my fellow believers, when you gather together to eat **the Lord's Supper**, you should not start eating until everyone has received food and drink. **34** Any people who are **so** hungry **that they start eating before everyone has received food and drink** should eat at their own houses. That way, when you gather together as fellow believers, God will not punish you.

I have not said everything that I need to say. So, I will instruct you about those things whenever I visit you.

12 **1** I am now moving on to speak about how God's Spirit specially empowers believers. I want to inform you, my fellow believers, about these things. **2** You remember **what you did** when you were not believers. You worshiped other gods. These other gods cannot even speak, but you did whatever **wrong things people told you to do** to worship these other gods. **3** So then, I am informing you that a person who curses Jesus does not speak with the power of God's Spirit. On the other hand, a person who says that Jesus is Lord must be speaking with the power of the Holy Spirit.

4 The Spirit empowers people in many different ways, but there is only one Spirit.
5 People serve the Lord in many different ways, but there is only one Lord. **6** People work for God in many different ways, but there is only one God. He is the one who empowers all people to function in all these ways.

7 Each believer receives from God specific ways in which God's Spirit works through them to help fellow believers. **8** For example, God's Spirit empowers some believers to speak wisely. Other believers can speak knowledgeably, and the same Spirit empowers them to do this. **9** The same Spirit empowers some believers to trust God in special ways. The same Spirit empowers other believers to heal others. **10** Other believers can do powerful things. Other believers can speak messages from God. Other believers can decide whether something comes from God's Spirit or not. Some believers can speak unknown languages. Other believers can

interpret those unknown languages. 11 The same Spirit works to empower believers to do all these things. There is just one Holy Spirit, and he decides how to work specifically through each believer.

12 We consider a person's body to be a unity, but the body has many body parts. So, all those body parts, no matter how many there are, together make up one body. We can think about the Messiah in a similar way. 13 Now, God has united us together as closely as if we made up one body. This happened when people baptized us, with the result that we have the one Spirit. We make up this one body even though some of us are Jewish people and others are non-Jewish people, and even though some of us are slaves and others are free people. Further, we all shared in this one Spirit just like we all shared a drink from one cup.

14 As you know, one body part does not make up a body. Rather, it takes many body parts to make up a body. 15 Imagine that your foot could talk to you, and it said that, since it was not a hand, it could not belong to your body. That reason does not keep it from belonging to your body. 16 Again, imagine that your ear could talk to you, and it said that, since it was not an eye, it could not belong to your body. That reason does not keep it from belonging to your body. 17 Imagine that only eyes made up your body. You would not be able to hear anything! Imagine that only ears made up your body. You would not be able to smell anything! 18 But here is what is true about the body: God decided how each body part should function, and he connected each body part to the body for a specific reason. 19 Imagine that all your body parts were the same kind of body part. You would not really have a body at all! 20 But here is what is true about the body: many different body parts exist. However, together they make up one body. 21 Imagine again that your body parts could talk. An eye would never tell a hand, "I do not need you." Similarly, a head would never tell feet, "I do not need you." 22 Rather, what is true is that the body parts that we consider to be the delicate ones are actually necessary. 23 Further, we more highly value the body parts that we think of as less valuable. We treat our indecent body parts more decently, 24 but we do not treat our decent body parts in any special way. In the end, God is the one who put all the body parts together into one body, and he makes the less valuable parts more valuable. 25 God did this in order that the body would not split up into different parts. Instead, the body parts work together and do not privilege one

body part over other body parts. 26 So, all the body parts hurt when one body part is hurting. All the body parts celebrate when somebody praises one body part.

27 I say all this because you all are like the Messiah's body. Each of you is like a body part in that body. 28 In line with that, God has specially empowered the people who worship him. First, some people are those whom God has sent to represent the Messiah. Second, some people proclaim what God says. Third, some people teach other believers. Further, some people do powerful things. Others can heal others, help other believers, guide the group of believers, or speak unknown languages. 29 Only some believers are those whom God has sent to represent the Messiah. Only some proclaim what God says. Only some teach other believers. Only some do powerful things. 30 Only some heal others. Only some speak unknown languages. Only some interpret those unknown languages. 31 Now I want you to eagerly seek the most beneficial gifts. Next, I will tell you about the very best thing you can do.

13 1 Imagine that I could speak many human and angelic languages, but I did not love others. I would be able to make much noise, like a loud metal instrument, but I would not be helping anyone. 2 Again, imagine that I could proclaim what God says, that I could comprehend and know everything, and that I believed so much that I could make mountains change places. But imagine further that I did not love others. Because of that, nothing else matters. 3 Yet again, imagine that I gifted everything I owned to people who needed food, and that I did not protect my own body, with the result that people would honor me. But imagine further that I did not love others. Because I did not love others, none of those things that I did help me at all.

4 Those who love others wait patiently and act graciously. They do not wish that others would lose the good things that they have. They do not say great things about themselves or act like they are great. 5 They do not do shameful things. They do not care only about themselves. They do not quickly become angry. They do not keep track of what others have done wrong.
6 They do not celebrate when people do bad things. Instead, they celebrate what is true.
7 They always put up with others. They always believe that God will do what is best, and they are always confident that God will do what he has promised. They always persevere when bad things happen.

8 Those who love others never cease doing so. However, someday people will no longer proclaim what God says. Someday, people will stop speaking unknown languages. Someday, people will no longer know special things. 9 These things will no longer happen, because we know special things incompletely, and we proclaim what God says incompletely. 10 So, when we experience what is complete when Jesus comes back, what is incomplete will no longer matter. 11 Here is an analogy: when we were young, we talked as children talk. We thought as children think. We made decisions as children make decisions. But when we grew up, we stopped acting as children do. 12 Right now, we see God indirectly, as if we saw a reflection in a mirror. When Jesus comes back, however, we will see God in person. Right now, we know God incompletely. When Jesus comes back, however, we will know God just as much as he knows us. 13 In the end, there are three things that we will always keep doing. We will believe in the Messiah, confidently expect God to do what he has promised, and love God and other people. However, loving God and others is the most important out of these three things.

14 1 You should seek to love others always. Also, you should eagerly seek that the Holy Spirit specially empowers you, particularly that you might be able to proclaim what God says. 2 You should desire this because people who talk in unknown languages are talking with God, not with other people. This is because no one knows what they are saying. Rather, they say secret things as the Holy Spirit empowers them. 3 On the other hand, those who proclaim what God says do talk to other people. They help other believers become stronger, urge other believers to act in proper ways, and comfort other believers. 4 People who talk in unknown languages help themselves become stronger. On the other hand, people who proclaim what God says help the group of believers become stronger.

5 I want all of you to talk in unknown languages. What I want even more, however, is that you might proclaim what God says. Proclaiming what God says is more important and helpful than talking in unknown languages. Of course, if someone explains the unknown language, then it too can help believers become stronger.

6 Here is what I am trying to say, my fellow believers: imagine that I, for example, visited you, and I talked in unknown languages. I would not be helping you at all. To actually help you, I would need to reveal things to you, help you know things, proclaim what God says to you, or teach you. 7 Even things that are not alive but that we use to make sounds illustrate

what I am saying. When someone plays a flute or a harp, the instrument must make various distinct sounds. Otherwise, no one would understand what a person plays on the flute or the harp, since all the sounds would be the same. 8 Further, suppose that a trumpet did not make clear sounds when a person used it to warn others. No one would know that they needed to get ready to fight the enemy. 9 Whenever you do not use words that other people recognize when you talk, you are like an instrument that does not make a clear sound. No one will comprehend what you are saying, and you will be like a person who talks to nobody. 10 It seems to be true that a great many varieties of languages exist. Every one of them communicates clearly. 11 So, when I, for example, do not understand how a language communicates, I am a stranger to everyone who speaks that language, and they are strangers to me. 12 So, here is what you must do: because you desire that the Holy Spirit specially empowers you, you should strive more and more to use what the Holy Spirit empowers you to do to help the group of believers become stronger.

13 Therefore, those who talk in unknown languages should ask God to enable them to explain what they are saying. 14 When I, for example, pray to God in an unknown language, only part of me is praying since I am not thinking about what I am saying. 15 Therefore, here is what you and I should do. We should pray to God not only with just some parts of us but also by thinking about what we are saying. We should sing to God not only with just some parts of us but also by thinking about what we are singing. 16 Imagine that people who do not understand unknown languages hear you praising God when you are using just some parts of you, and you are not thinking about what you are saying. Those people will not be able to participate when you praise God because they do not understand the unknown language that you are speaking. 17 In this situation, you praise God appropriately. However, you do not help other people become stronger. 18 I give thanks to God that I talk in unknown languages more than you all do. 19 However, when I gather together with fellow believers to worship God, I want to speak only a few words that I think about. In this way, I can teach other believers and not just myself. It is better for me to do that than to say a million words in an unknown language.

20 My fellow believers, I do not want you to be foolish about these things, like little children are. Rather, you should know much about these things, like a fully grown adult does. You should only be like little children by not doing what is wrong. 21 The prophet Isaiah wrote in the Scriptures what the Lord says,

"I will talk to my people Israel
by means of people who speak foreign languages.
However, they will not listen to me in this way."

22 Therefore, talking in unknown languages signifies that God judges people who do not believe **in the Messiah**, not people who do believe **in the Messiah**. On the other hand, proclaiming what God says **signifies that God acts kindly toward** people who believe **in the Messiah**, not toward people who do not believe **in the Messiah**. **23** So, imagine that the whole group of believers gathered together to worship God, and all of you talked in unknown languages. Imagine further that people who do not understand **unknown languages** or who do not believe **in the Messiah** visit your group. They will tell **others** that you are crazy. **24** On the other hand, imagine that all of you proclaimed what God says. Imagine further that any people who do not believe **in the Messiah** or who do not understand **unknown languages** visit your group. Everything that you say will show them and confront them with **what they have done wrong**. **25** **In this way,** everyone will know the things that these **visitors** hide from others. In response, they will kneel down and worship God. They will proclaim **to others** that God truly is with you.

26 My fellow believers, here is what I mean. Whenever you gather together **to worship God**, each believer **has something to do**. Some sing songs, others teach, others reveal things, others speak in an unknown language, others interpret an unknown language. Believers should do all these things to help other believers become stronger. **27** When believers are talking in unknown languages, only two or three at most **should speak**. They should talk one after the other, and someone needs to explain **what they are saying**. **28** On the other hand, when believers gather to worship God and a person who can explain the unknown language is not there, everyone who can talk in unknown languages should keep quiet. Instead **of talking out loud**, they should talk **in unknown languages** privately to God.

29 Similarly, **around** two or three people who proclaim what God says should speak. Everyone else should decide whether **what they say** is correct or incorrect. **30** Now, whenever God reveals something to a person who is listening **to someone else proclaim what God says when believers gather together**, the person who is speaking should stop speaking. **31** **You should do that** so that everyone has a chance to proclaim what God says, one after the other. In that way, everyone learns something, and everyone becomes stronger. **32** Those who proclaim what

God says control how and when they proclaim it. 33 That is true because what is peaceful and orderly, not what is disorderly, characterizes God.

I want you to act like all the other people whom God has set apart for himself act when they gather together to worship God. 34 Wives should keep quiet when believers gather together and their husbands are speaking. They should not talk but rather honor and obey their husbands. They should do this because that is what we find in God's law. 35 Now, when wives want to learn more about what their husbands are saying, they should ask their husbands questions in their own houses. They should do this because wives who talk when believers gather together and their husbands are speaking shame themselves and their families. 36 If you dislike what I have said, remember that you are not the source of what God has said, and you are not the only ones who have heard and believed what God has said. 37 All people who consider themselves to be those who proclaim what God says or those whom the Holy Spirit has specially empowered must recognize that the Lord himself requires what I am writing to you. 38 On the other hand, you should not recognize as authoritative any people who do not recognize that the Lord requires what I have said.

39 In the end, my fellow believers, eagerly seek to proclaim what God says. Further, do not prohibit people from speaking unknown languages. 40 Finally, when you gather together to worship God, you should always act in honorable and orderly ways.

15 1 Next, I am informing you, fellow believers, about the good news that I told you about. You learned this good news from me, and you firmly believe it. 2 When you continue to firmly believe the message that I preached to you, God saves you by means of that message. Otherwise, you believed the message for nothing.

3 Here is one of the first things that I told you, which I learned from the Lord: the Messiah died on the cross to take away our sins, just as the authors of the holy books wrote. 4 People buried him, but during the third day after that, God made him alive again, just as the authors of the holy books wrote. 5 He appeared to Peter and then to the rest of Jesus' 12 closest followers. 6 After that, he appeared at one time to greater than 500 fellow believers. Although some of these people have died, almost all of them are still alive. 7 After that, he appeared to James

and then to everyone whom he sent to represent him. 8 Finally, after he appeared to all of them, he appeared to me also. So, because I became one whom Jesus sent to represent him after everyone else, I am like a baby that was born in an unusual way. 9 In fact, I am less significant and honorable than every other person whom the Messiah sent to represent him. Indeed, since I tried to destroy those who believe in the Messiah, I do not deserve it when others call me one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. 10 However, God graciously made me one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. Further, what he has given me has resulted in great things. In fact, I worked harder than all the other ones whom the Messiah sent to represent him. Of course, it was not really I who worked so hard. Instead, it was God graciously working through me who did so much. 11 In the end, both I and the other apostles proclaim the good news that I have described, and you trusted this good news.

12 Because all believers say that God made the Messiah alive again, no one in your group should be claiming that people who have died will not live again. 13 Suppose that it were true that people who have died will not live again. In that case, God did not make the Messiah alive again. 14 Suppose that it is true that God did not make the Messiah alive again. In that case, it was for no reason that we proclaimed the good news and you believed it. 15 Further, we would be people who tell lies about God, because we declared before God that he made the Messiah alive again when he really did not. This would all be true were God not to make those who have died alive again. 16 You can tell that this is true when you suppose that God does not make people who have died alive again. In that case, God did not make even the Messiah alive again. 17 Suppose that it is true that God did not make the Messiah alive again. In that case, you believed the good news for no reason, and sin continues to control you. 18 In that case again, the believers who have died will never live again. 19 Suppose that we can confidently expect the Messiah to help us only before we die. In that case, all people should feel sorry for us more than they feel sorry for anyone else.

20 But here is what is true: God has made the Messiah alive again, and he is the first of those who have died whom God will make alive again. 21 You can tell that this is true, because people die through what the one man Adam did. So also people who have died will live again through what the one man Jesus did. 22 What I mean is that, just as all people end up dying because God united them to Adam, in the same way all believers will live again because God

unites them to the Messiah. **23** Now, all people who will live again do so in turn: first the Messiah and then those who belong to the Messiah when he comes back again. **24** After that, what everything that God has created is waiting for will happen. At that time, the Messiah will get rid of everyone and everything that rules and governs and controls. Then, he will present God, who is our Father, with the kingdom so that God rules over everything. **25** Here is how that works: God has decided that the Messiah will rule until whenever he has conquered all those who oppose him. **26** The last thing that opposes Christ that he will get rid of is that people die. **27** Now, David wrote, "he made him conquer everything that opposes him." Of course, "everything" does not include God, who is the one who "made him conquer everything." **28** So, after he has conquered everything, then God the Son will submit to the one who made him conquer everything. In this way, God will conquer and rule all things.

29 Now, consider people who baptize others to help those who are dead. Further, suppose again that God never makes people who have died alive again. In that case, there is no reason for people to baptize others to help those who have died. **30** Even more, in that case, there is no reason for we who proclaim the good news to constantly endanger ourselves as we do. **31** Indeed, I risk dying very frequently. I swear that this is true by how I boast about you, fellow believers, which I do because God has united all of us to the Messiah, who is Jesus our Lord. **32** Suppose that I was thinking about merely human things while I struggled against those who opposed me when I visited the city of Ephesus. In that case, struggling against them does not benefit me at all. Suppose again that God does not make people who have died alive again. In that case, we should do what many people say to do: eat food, and drink wine, because we will die very soon. **33** You should not believe what is wrong. This popular saying is true: "Evil friends lead astray a person who normally does what is proper." **34** I want you to start acting alertly and properly. You should not keep doing what is wrong. I command these things because some people in your group do not know God. I say that in order to make you feel ashamed

35 Now a person may ask about the way in which the people who have died live again and about what form they will take. **36** If you do not know the answers to those questions, you are not thinking clearly! Just think about this: a seed that you put in the ground must die before it can grow. **37** Speaking about a seed that you put in the ground, you know that it is not in the form of the plant. Rather, it is just the seed. This is true whether we are speaking about wheat or some

other crop. **38** Indeed, God makes seeds grow into the forms that he chooses, and each kind of seed has a specific form into which it grows. **39** The physical parts of different living beings vary. For example, humans, mammals, birds, and fish all have different kinds of physical parts. **40** Some things exist in heaven, and other things exist on earth. The forms of things in heaven are glorious in one way, while the forms of things on earth are glorious in another way. **41** Further, the sun, moon, and stars are glorious in different ways. In fact, each star is glorious in its own specific way.

42 Here is the way all that applies to how people who have died live again. People put a decaying body into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it can never die. **43** People put a body that receives no respect into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that everyone respects it. People put a frail body into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it is strong. **44** People put a body that belongs to this world into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it belongs to the world that God will renew. Just as some bodies belong to this world, so some bodies belong to the world that God will renew.

45 You can tell that this is true because Moses wrote, "God made the first human, Adam, as a living being who belonged to this world." On the other hand, Jesus, who is like another Adam, now belongs to the world that God will renew and gives life to others. **46** Now the first Adam's body that belongs to this world existed first, and only after that does the last Adam's body exist that belongs to the world that God will renew. **47** Adam, who represents the first kind of human, belonged on the earth. In fact, God made him from dust. On the other hand, Jesus, who represents the second kind of human, belongs in heaven. **48** All people who belong on the earth are like Adam. All those who belong in heaven are like Jesus. **49** Our bodies currently are like Adam's body that belongs to this world. In the same way, we should live in such a way that our bodies will eventually be like Jesus' body, which belongs to the world that God will renew.

50 Listen to this, my fellow believers: human bodies as they currently exist cannot participate in God's kingdom that lasts forever, since they fall apart and die. **51** Pay attention! I am going to tell you something that God has now revealed. Not all of us will die, but God will transform all of us. **52** He will transform us in one moment, as fast as a person blinks an eye. This will happen when an angel blows the trumpet that signals that this world is ending. When an angel blows that trumpet, God will make those who have died live again so that they can

never die, and he will transform everyone who still lives. **53** So, bodies that fall apart and die need to transform into bodies that last forever and can never die. **54** When our bodies that fall apart and die transform into bodies that last forever and can never die, at that time what the prophets wrote about will finally happen:

"God has made it so that people no longer die."

55 **Further,**

"When people die, this does not destroy or hurt them."

56 People die because sin causes them to die, and that happens because the law specifies dying as the penalty for sin. **57** However, I praise God because he has enabled us to conquer **how we sin and die**. **He has done this** by means of what our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, has done.

58 So then, fellow believers whom I love, firmly believe **what you know is true**. Consistently serve the Lord more and more. **You should do these things** because you know that what you do **to serve the Lord** will result in great things, since God has united you to the Lord.

16 **1** I am now moving on to speak about the money that I am collecting for God's people **who are Jewish**. I want you to do what I instructed the groups of believers **who live** in the region of Galatia to do. **2** During each Sunday, every one of you should take some money out of whatever you have earned and save it. That way, I will not need to collect money when I visit you. **3** Choose some trustworthy people from your group. When I visit you, I will have them take the money **that you have collected** to the city of Jerusalem. Also, I will give them letters **that say that I have authorized them**. **4** You and I may decide that I should go **to Jerusalem** as well. In that case, the people **whom you choose** will travel with me.

5 I am going to visit you after I travel through the region of Macedonia, which is the way I will be traveling. **6** In fact, I may spend some time with you, maybe the whole winter. That way, you can assist me in traveling to wherever I decide to go next. **7** **I am making these plans** because I would rather wait to be with you for a long time than visit you right now for just a short time. I confidently expect to do this as long as it is what the Lord wants **me to do**. **8** For now, I plan on remaining here in the city of Ephesus until the Pentecost festival. **9** **I am**

remaining here because God has allowed me to effectively and freely proclaim the good news. Further, I need to resist the large number of people who are working against me.

10 Whenever Timothy arrives in your city, make sure that he feels safe when he is with you. You should do this because he serves the Lord by proclaiming the good news, just like I do. **11** So, do not treat him disrespectfully. Rather, act in a friendly way by assisting him in traveling back to me. You should do this because I anticipate that he will come back to me with the other believers who are traveling to visit me.

12 I am now moving on to speak about our fellow believer, Apollos. I firmly urged him to visit you with the other believers who were traveling to visit you. However, he firmly decided that it was not the right time to visit you. Instead, he will visit you when he thinks that it is the right time.

13 Watch out for what is wrong! Firmly believe the good news! Be courageous! Be determined! **14** You should focus on loving others whenever you think or do anything.

15 You know that those who live in the house of Stephanas were the first people to believe the good news in the region of Achaia. Further, they have chosen to serve God's people. I ask you, my fellow believers, **16** to honor and obey them and other people like them. In fact, you should honor and obey every person who works hard to proclaim the good news with us. **17** I am happy that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived here. That is because they have allowed me to connect with you all even when you are not with me. **18** They encouraged and energized both me and you. Therefore, you should honor them and other people like them.

19 The groups of believers here in the region of Asia say hello to you. Aquila and Priscilla, as those whom God has also united to the Lord, say hello to you affectionately. The believers that gather in their house also say hello to you. **20** All the fellow believers who are with me say hello to you. Welcome each other in a loving way.

21 I, Paul, say hello to you. I am writing these last words myself instead of having my scribe write them. **22** May God curse everyone who fails to love the Lord. I pray that the Lord returns soon. **23** I pray that the Lord Jesus will be gracious to you. **24** I continue to love all of you, since God has united us together with Jesus the Messiah. May it be so!

2 Corinthians

1 **1** I, Paul, write this letter to you, and Timothy, our fellow believer, is with me. God chose to send me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. I send this letter to you who are part of the group of believers belonging to God, which is in the city of Corinth. I also send this letter to all the believers who live throughout the region of Achaia. **2** May God, who is our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

3 May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah—he is our merciful Father and our God who always comforts us. **4** God comforts us whenever we suffer. He does that so that we can comfort others who are suffering in any way. God enables us to comfort them in the very same way as he comforts us. **5** You see, the Messiah suffered a lot for us, and now we continue to suffer as the Messiah did because we belong to him. But now the Messiah also comforts us in the same abundant amount. **6** So whenever people cause us to suffer, it is so that God may comfort you and protect you spiritually. Whenever God comforts us, it is so that he may also comfort you. God does this as you patiently endure when people cause you to suffer just as people cause us to suffer. **7** We know that God will also comfort you as you suffer like we suffer. Therefore, we are very confident that you will continue trusting in Jesus.

8 For example, fellow believers, we want you to know about the bad things that happened to us in the province of Asia. They were so difficult that we felt that we could not endure them. We felt certain that we were going to die. **9** We felt like a person feels when he has heard a judge say, “I condemn you to die.” But God allowed us to feel that way so that we would learn to not rely on ourselves but, instead, to rely on God. He causes people who have died to live again. **10** Even though it seemed to us that we would certainly die, God rescued us from the people who wanted to kill us, and he will continue to rescue us from similar people. We confidently expect that he will rescue us again **11** as you help us by praying for us. Please do

pray for us so that many people will thank God for what he will graciously do for us because many people prayed for us.

12 We are proud that we can honestly say that we have behaved toward all people in a holy and sincere way, as God has enabled us to do. We do not behave in the way that unbelievers think is wise. Instead, God graciously guides us, especially **as we interact** with you. **13** To see this, look at my letters. In all of my letters to you I have written only what you can **easily** read and understand. I hope that **soon** you will understand **us** completely **14** just as you partially understand us **already**. Then when our Lord Jesus returns, you will be just as proud of us as we will be proud of you.

15-16 Because I was confident that you were proud of me, I planned to visit you once on my way to the province of Macedonia, and then to visit you again as I returned from there. In that way, you would benefit twice from having me with you. Also, you could help supply what I would need to go from your city to the province of Judea. **17** I intended to visit you those two times**, but then I did not come the second time**. That does not mean that I changed my plan lightly. I do not make or change my plans according to what I might desire at the time. I do not say, "Yes, I will do that" and then quickly say, "No, I will not do it." **18** Just as God is faithful, we are completely sincere in everything that we say to you. We would never say, "Yes" when we really think, "No." **19** I and Silvanus and Timothy taught you about the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. **You know that** he would never say, "Yes" if what he meant was, "No." Because of who he is, our message about him has also remained consistent and dependable. **20** Because of Jesus, we can rely on all of the promises of God. Jesus fulfills them all. Therefore, Jesus is also the one who enables us to say, "Yes, it is true" when we praise God. **21** It is God who causes us, along with you, to keep on believing strongly in the Messiah. God is also the one who has given us his Spirit so that we can serve him. **22** God gave us the Holy Spirit to live within us. That shows both that we belong to him and that he will also do for us everything else that he has promised to do for us.

23 So now I will tell you why I changed my mind and did not visit you again as I intended to do. May God strike me dead if I am lying, but he knows that what I am telling you is true. The reason that I did not return to Corinth was so that I might not grieve you by having to speak to you severely about the wrong things that you have done. **24** When I say that, I do not mean that we are your masters who give you orders about what to believe and do. Instead,

everything that we tell you about living for God is so that you will be joyful. We do not need to command you, because God himself tells you what to believe and do.

2 **1** I have not visited you because I have chosen to avoid visiting you if it hurts you and me like it did last time I visited you. **2** I chose not to visit you again because, when I hurt you, I have hurt the only people who can make me glad. **3** I already wrote in my previous letter what I am now saying to you. I wrote those things so that, when I next visited you, you would not hurt me, and I would be glad about you as I should. I wrote those things because I was sure about all of you that you would be glad when I was glad. **4** I suffered greatly and hurt inside when I wrote that previous letter to you. In fact, I wept while I wrote it. I sent it to you so that you would realize how much I care for you. I did not intend to hurt you.

5 However, the person who has hurt others did not really hurt me. Rather, that person hurt some of you. I use the word "some" so that I do not include all of you as those whom that person hurt. **6** Most of you together have disciplined that person. You do not need to do anything more. **7** So then, instead of disciplining that person, you should now forgive and encourage that person. Otherwise, the person will become very sad and give up.

8 Therefore, I encourage you to show publicly that you care for that person. **9** Another reason for which I wrote that previous letter was in order that I could find out for sure if you would do everything that I asked you to do. **10** In the end, when you forgive any person for anything, I too forgive that person. In fact, I have forgiven that person for what that person did, even though it was basically nothing. I did that to help you, as the Messiah desires. **11** We should forgive others so that Satan will not control us. Indeed, we know all about his plans to control us.

12 To return to how I traveled, when I arrived in the city of Troas, the Lord Jesus made it possible for me to proclaim the good news about the Messiah effectively. **13** However, since my fellow believer Titus was not in the city of Troas, I continued to be anxious about what happened when he visited you. Therefore, I said goodbye to the believers there and left to travel to the region of Macedonia.

14 Now we praise God! He is the one who, because he has united us to the Messiah,
continually includes us as he conquers his enemies. Further, he uses us to reveal to people in
many places what God is like. 15 In fact, we are like a pleasant smell that comes from Christ
and that pleases God. We are like this smell when we are with people whom God is rescuing
and when we are with people who are passing away. 16 Those who are passing away think that
we are like a smell that comes from a dead body and that causes people to die. On the other
hand, those whom God is rescuing think that we are like a smell that comes from a living thing
and that causes people to live. No one can perfectly proclaim the good news in that way! 17 You
can tell that we do not do so perfectly because we do not sell the message that God has given us
for money, like many other people do. Rather, we only want to serve God, not to gain
something. Indeed, we proclaim the good news because that is what God sent us to do. So, as
those whom God has united to the Messiah, we proclaim the good news to please God, not
people.

3 1 We are not going to prove to you a second time that we are trustworthy. As you know,
you do not need to write or receive a note that proves that we are trustworthy, even though you
might need to do those things for other people. 2 It is you all who function like a note that
proves that we are trustworthy. When we care for each other, all people realize that we are
trustworthy, just as if they read a note from you. 3 Everyone knows that you are like a note that
the Messiah wrote and that we delivered. The Messiah did not write this note on stone slabs
using dye. Rather, it is as if he wrote it inside you by working through the Holy Spirit, who is the
only real God.

4 I say those things because we are sure about what God thinks of us. We are sure because
the Messiah makes us sure. 5 Of course, we cannot proclaim the good news well on our own,
and we do not think that anything we do well is because of us. Rather, God enables us to
proclaim the good news well. 6 He has also enabled us to act on behalf of the new agreement.
The Holy Spirit gives this new agreement, so it is not just words that someone wrote down. This
is important because people who rely on the Holy Spirit will live, but people who rely on words
that someone wrote down will die.

7 Further, when Moses acted on behalf of the old agreement that condemned people to die,
God carved the words of the agreement onto stone slabs. What Moses did was glorious enough

that the Israelites could not gaze at his face afterwards because it reflected how glorious God is, although that would eventually go away. 8 So then, when people act on behalf of the new agreement that gives the Holy Spirit, that is even more glorious. 9 Indeed, when Moses acted on behalf of the old agreement that led to God condemning people, it was glorious. So then, when people act on behalf of the new agreement that leads to people becoming righteous, it is even more glorious! 10 In fact, the glorious old agreement does not look glorious at all because of how glorious the new agreement is. 11 Indeed, the old agreement that is going away was glorious. So then, the new agreement that will last forever is even more glorious!

12 So then, since we confidently expect to receive these glorious things, we behave very boldly. 13 We are not like Moses, who wore a cloth that hid his face. That way, the Israelites could not gaze at how his face stopped reflecting how glorious God is. 14 In fact, the Israelites did not understand what God revealed. Indeed, even now, when someone reads the Scriptures that contain the old agreement, it is as if the cloth that Moses wore keeps people from understanding it. That is because no one can understand these Scriptures until God unites them to the Messiah. 15 Indeed, even now, when someone reads the Law of Moses, it is as if that cloth keeps people from understanding it. 16 However, when people begin to trust the Lord God, God enables them to understand the Law of Moses, just as if he removed that cloth.
17 When I speak of the Lord God, I mean the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enables people to understand the Scriptures. 18 So, all of us who believe show how glorious the Lord God is, and we do so without a cloth covering our faces. God is changing us so that we are like the Messiah. In this way, the glorious Lord, who is the Holy Spirit, makes us glorious.

4 1 Because of those things, and because God mercifully enabled us to act on behalf of the new agreement, we do not give up. 2 Rather, we refuse to do anything that we would hide because it is disgraceful. We do not try to deceive others, and we do not change the message from God. Instead, we proclaim the true message, and we prove to everyone that God considers us trustworthy. 3 In fact, the only people who do not understood the good news that we proclaim are people who are passing away. 4 Satan, who rules the world right now, has kept these people who do not believe from understanding. That way, the good news about the glorious Messiah, who shows what God is like, does not change them. 5 I say that the good news is about the Messiah because we do not tell other people about ourselves. Rather, we tell

them about Jesus the Messiah, the Lord, and about how we serve you because of him. 6 We do that because it is God who spoke these words: “What is dark will become bright.” He has enabled us to understand what is true about how glorious he is, just as if he had shined a light on us. God has revealed this in Jesus the Messiah.

7 We experience and proclaim these wonderful things, but we ourselves are weak and worthless. That way, it is clear that God causes these things to be so powerful, not we. 8 We experience many difficult things. People persecute us, but they do not overcome us. We are not sure what to do, but we do not give up. 9 People try to hurt us, but God does not abandon us. People act against us, but they do not defeat us. 10 We continually suffer physically, like Jesus did. That way, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. 11 Indeed, while we are living, God allows us to suffer continually because of Jesus. That way, even though we will die, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. 12 As you can see, God allows us to suffer, but he will make you live.

13 Now we are those who trust God, just like the person who wrote in the psalm, “I trusted God, so I spoke.” We too trust God, so we too speak. 14 We do that because we realize that God made Jesus alive again, so he will also make us alive again. Then we will be with Jesus and with you before God. 15 We do each of those things to help you. That way, God will act graciously to more people. Then, people will thank God more, which honors God.

16 Therefore, we do not give up. Instead, even though the part of us that people can see is perishing, every day God is strengthening the part of us that people cannot see. 17 We do not give up, because when we suffer in temporary and unimportant ways, that will cause us to become glorious forever and in important ways, ways that we cannot even imagine. 18 So, we pay attention to what we do not see rather than to what we see. That is because what we do not see will last forever, but what we see will pass away.

5 1 Indeed, we realize that the bodies we have on this earth will die. They are like tents that people destroy. However, God will give us new bodies that will live forever. They will be like buildings that God creates in the heavenly places. 2 In fact, we mourn how we live in these bodies. We want God to give us new bodies, just as if he was putting new clothes on us. These

new bodies will be like buildings that God gives us from heaven. 3 Whenever we receive our new bodies, they will be like clothes that keep us from being naked.

4 Even further, while we have these bodies that are like tents, we mourn, and these bodies make living difficult. Because of that, it is not that we want to be without bodies, which would be like having no clothes. Rather, we want to receive new bodies, which will be like putting on new clothes. That way, we will live forever instead of expecting to die. 5 God is the one who makes us ready for these new bodies. He gave the Holy Spirit to us, which shows that he will also give us everything else that he has promised.

6 So then, we are confident at all times about what God will give us. Also, we realize that while we have these bodies, we are not with the Lord Jesus. 7 Indeed, we act as we do because we trust the Lord Jesus, not because we see him. 8 As I said, we are confident about what God will give us. Also, we would choose instead to be without our bodies and with the Lord Jesus. 9 So then, we strive to please the Lord Jesus whether we are with him or not. 10 We do that because all of us will have to appear before the Messiah and he will decide whether each one of us has done what is right or what is wrong. Then, he will give us what we deserve in proportion to what we did while we had these bodies.

11 So then, because we experience what it means to fear the Lord Jesus, we convince others to fear him also. God knows that we are trustworthy, and I want you also to know that we are trustworthy. 12 We are not proving to you a second time that we are trustworthy. Rather, we are enabling you to say great things about us. That way, you can respond to anybody who says great things about how people appear on the outside and not about who those people really are on the inside. 13 So, when we seem crazy, we are serving God. When we seem to think normally, we are serving you. 14 Those things are true because the Messiah loves us, and that directs us to act in certain ways. Here is how we think about it: one person, the Messiah, died to rescue all people. Because of that, it is as if all people died. 15 Further, this is why he died to rescue all people: that way, those who live spiritually will not do whatever they want anymore. Instead, they will do what the Messiah wants, since he died to rescue them and God made him alive again.

16 Because of all that, we do not think about anyone in merely human ways any longer. Indeed, although at one time we thought about the Messiah in merely human ways, we do not

think about him in those ways any longer. 17 So then, whenever God unites people to the Messiah, he makes them new people. What they used to be has disappeared. Look, what they are now is something new! 18 God is the one who gives us every one of these things. By working through the Messiah, he has enabled us to be with him. Further, God empowers us to act so that others can also be with him. 19 Here is how that works: God works through Christ to enable every person to be with him. In doing so, he forgives people for what they have done wrong. Further, he commissions us to tell others about how they can be with God.

20 Because God has commissioned us, we represent the Messiah. So, God encourages others through us. We speak for the Messiah when we ask you to believe the good news so that you can be with God. 21 Jesus did not sin. Despite that, for our sake God treated him as if he had sinned. As a result, God makes us righteous by uniting us to Jesus.

6 1 As those who serve with God, we encourage you to accept fully what God has graciously done for you, so that it changes how you live. 2 You should do that because God says in the scripture:

> "When I considered it to be the right time, I heard you and acted.
> Indeed, when I was rescuing people, I assisted you."

Right now is when God considers it to be the best time! Indeed, right now is when God is rescuing people!

3 We avoid doing anything that might offend others. That way, no one can criticize how we serve God. 4 Rather, we prove that we are trustworthy in every way while we serve God. We always persevere when people hurt and persecute us. 5 We persevere when people strike us, put us in jail, and stir up crowds against us. We persevere when we work hard, do not sleep much, and go hungry. 6 We are free from evil things, we know what is true, and we do not easily become angry. We care for others, we have the Holy Spirit, and we love people sincerely. 7 We proclaim what is true, and God enables us to act powerfully. We are righteous, which is like having a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. 8 Some people honor us, and others shame us. Some people say bad things about us, and others say good things about us. Some people think that we tell lies, but really we speak what is true. 9 Some people think that

nobody acknowledges us, but really, God acknowledges us. Some people think that we are dying, but really, we are alive! Some people think that God is punishing us, but really, he has not decided that we should die. **10** Some people think that we mourn, but really, we continually rejoice. Some people think that we are needy, but really, we help many people gain what is truly valuable. Some people think that we do not have anything, but really, we have everything.

11 Fellow believers in the city of Corinth, we have told you what is true, and we care for you greatly. **12** We are not the ones who have stopped **caring for you**. Rather, it is you who have stopped caring **for us**. **13** Now I will speak to you **as if you thought in simple ways** like children **do**: since we care for you, it would only be right if you cared for us in return.

14 Do not join in with people who do not trust **the Messiah**. **I say that** because what is right and what is wrong have nothing in common. Further, what is good shares nothing with what is evil. **15** The Messiah does not agree **about anything** with the devil Beliar. Further, people who trust **the Messiah** do not belong with people who do not trust **the Messiah**. **16** God's temple does not go together with other gods. In fact, it is as if we **who believe** were the only real God's temple. **You can tell that we are God's temple** because God spoke **these words in the Scriptures**:

> "I will be with my people.
> Indeed, I will not leave them.
> They will consider me to be their God
> and I will consider them to be my people."

17 So then, **we should do what** the Lord **God** says **in the Scriptures**:

> "Get away from people **who do not serve me**.
> Make sure that you are different **than them**.
> Stay away from anything that defiles you."
> **He says,** "Then, I will gladly receive you."

18 Further, the Lord **God**, who rules all things, says,

> "I will be your father.
> You will be my sons and daughters."

7 1 So then, fellow believers whom I love, because God has promised these things to us, we should get rid of everything that defiles us on the outside and on the inside. We should become completely holy as we fear God.

2 We ask you to care for us! We have not hurt, cheated, or destroyed anyone. 3 I am not saying these things to blame you. In fact, as I have already written in this letter, we care for you greatly, no matter what happens. 4 I am very confident that you will do what is right. In fact, I often say great things about you. You encourage me greatly, and I rejoice very much about you even while we are suffering.

5 Now to return to how I traveled, when we arrived in Macedonia, things did not get easier for us. Instead, we suffered in many ways. Other people quarreled with us, and we ourselves were often afraid. 6 However, God encourages people who feel discouraged. He encouraged us by having Titus join us. 7 God encouraged us partly by having Titus join us, but even more by how what you did encourages Titus. He has told us that you want to see me, that you are sorry for what you did, and that you strive to honor me. Because of those things, I rejoiced more than I did before.

8 I am not sorry that I wrote the previous letter, even though I hurt you with what I wrote. In fact, the only reason I would be sorry that I wrote it is that I know that the letter hurt you, although only for a little while. 9 However, now that Titus has told us about you, I am very happy. I am happy not because I hurt you. Rather, I am happy because when I hurt you, you became sorry for what you did and stopped doing it. In fact, you felt hurt in a way that honors God. So, we have not deprived you of anything good. 10 That is because, when people feel hurt in a way that honors God, it causes them to be sorry for what they did and stop doing it. They are not sorry that they felt hurt, because God uses how they feel to rescue them. However, when people feel hurt in the way that most people do, how they feel eventually causes them to die. 11 As for you, when you felt hurt in this way that honors God, it certainly caused you to be very eager to do what is right. You argued that you were not guilty. You were upset about what had happened. You feared what might happen. You wanted to see us. You strove to honor us. You punished the person who had done what was wrong. By doing all those things, you have shown that you have done what is right in response to what happened. 12 So then, when I sent the previous letter to you, I was not primarily dealing with the person who did what was wrong.

Also, I was not primarily dealing with the person whom he hurt. Rather, I intended to show you how eager you are to act rightly toward us and that God approves of this. 13 Since you responded in these ways, you have encouraged us.

In fact, although you did encourage us, we are even more happy about how you made Titus happy. You did that when you all comforted and strengthened him. 14 We were this happy because you did not disgrace me after I had said great things about you to Titus. Instead, Titus found out that the great things we said about you were actually true. This is just like how everything we told you was also true. 15 Titus recalls how you all obeyed us, particularly how you feared him when he arrived. Because of that, he cares about you even more now. 16 I am happy that I am completely sure that you are doing what is right.

8 1 My fellow believers, we want to tell you about what God has graciously enabled the groups of believers here in Macedonia province to do. 2 Even though they suffered very much, which tested how they would respond, they were extremely generous. They were very joyful as they did this, even though they had very little. 3 In fact, I can tell you that they offered as much as they could afford, and even more than they could afford. They were the ones who chose to do this. 4 They were very insistent when they urged us to accept what they were giving. They wanted to share in serving God's people. 5 Further, they did even more than what we had expected. They dedicated themselves primarily to serving the Lord Jesus and then also to serving us. That is just what God wants. 6 Because of that, we encouraged Titus to finish accepting what you are giving, especially since he had already started doing so. 7 As for you, you are already doing well in so many ways. This includes how you trust God, what you say, how much you know, how you are always eager to do what is right, and how much we love you. So, you should also do well in giving money for fellow believers.

8 I am not ordering you to give money. Rather, I want to show that you really care for fellow believers by comparing what you do with how other people are always eager to give money. 9 You should be eager to give money because you realize that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, kindly gave up everything he had to help you. He did that even though he had very many things. He wanted to give you many things by himself giving up what he had.

10 I am telling you what I think about giving money, because hearing what I think helps you. Last year, you both wanted to and did start **giving money**. **11** Right now, you should finish what you started. That way, what you finish doing matches what you eagerly wanted **to do**, **which is to give some** of what you have. **12** Now God approves of **what people give** based on what they have, not based on what they do not have. **This is true** as long as they are eager **to give**.

13 So, it is not that I want you to suffer while other believers do well. Rather, I want **believers to share what they have** equally. **14** Right now, how much you have can help people who do not have much. Then, when those people have much and you have little, they can help you. That way, believers share **what they have** equally. **15** **We want it to be** like what someone wrote **when God powerfully gave food to the Israelites**:

> "The people who had much did not have more than they needed.
> The people who had little did not have less than they needed."

16 We thank God for causing Titus to be eager **to care** for you, just like we are. **17** Indeed, he is visiting you partly because he listened to us urging him **to do so**. Mostly, however, **he is visiting you** because he is so eager **to care for you** that he himself chose **to visit you**. **18** We have chosen a fellow believer to go with Titus. Many groups of believers commend him **because of what he does** for the sake of the good news. **19** More than that, the groups of believers selected him to travel with me. He is helping us as we work to accept **money for the believers in Jerusalem**. **Accepting this money** honors the Lord **God** and demonstrates how eager we are **to care for fellow believers**.

20 So, we are doing what we can to keep others from criticizing us for what we do **with this money** that people have generously given. **21** As you can see, before **we started to collect this money**, we planned how to do it well. **We considered** what the Lord **God** thinks, but we also **considered** what other people think.

22 We have chosen another fellow believer to go with Titus and the other man **I have been speaking about**. We have tested him and know for sure that he is eager **to serve God**. In fact, because he is very confident that you **will do what is right**, right now he is particularly eager **to serve with you**. **23** **I recommend these men.** Titus joins me **in what I do** and works with me to

help you. The groups of believers send the other two fellow believers, and they honor the Messiah. 24 So then, show these three men and also the groups of believers that you really do care for fellow believers and that the great things we say about you really are true.

9 1 Really, though, I do not need to say anything to you about how we are serving God's people in Jerusalem. 2 That is because I recognize how eager you are to give. In fact, I say great things about you to the believers in Macedonia province. I tell them that you believers in Achaia province were already preparing to give last year. How eager you were to give has encouraged most of them to give also. 3 However, although we know that you are eager, we have chosen these three fellow believers to visit you to make sure that the great things we say about how you are eager to give prove true. They are visiting you so that you can finish preparing to give and in this way match what I have told the Macedonians about you. 4 On the other hand, think about what would happen were some believers from Macedonia province to visit you with me and discover that you had not finished preparing to give. How you had acted would shame even us, and it would most definitely shame you. 5 Because of that, I decided that I needed to ask these three fellow believers to visit you before I do and help you with what you said you would give. That way, you will have already prepared what you are giving, and you will offer it because you want to and not because we are making you do it.

6 Here is an example that illustrates how you should give. When farmers plant only a few seeds, they harvest only a little food. When farmers plant many seeds, they harvest much food. Much like that, when you help other people, someone will help you in return. 7 Each of you should choose for yourself how much to give. Do not choose how much to give because you feel hurt or because you have to. I say that because God cares for people who give gladly. 8 God can graciously give you more than you need. That way, because you always have everything you need in every situation, you can always do everything that is right. 9 You can tell that is true because someone wrote about this kind of person in the Scriptures,

> "They give to many people.
> Yes, they help those who have very little.
> They will do what is right forever."

10 God provides the seeds for the one who plants them, and he provides food for people to
eat. So, he will also provide what you need and give you more of it. Further, when you do what
is right, he will use that to accomplish good things. 11 God consistently gives you more than
you need so that you can always generously give to others. When you give generously and we
send your gifts to fellow believers, they thank God.

12 In fact, when you serve God's people in Jerusalem by giving to them, it provides what
they need. Even more, though, it causes them to thank God very much. 13 You prove
yourselves by serving God's people in Jerusalem. So then, they will honor God because you
actually do what the good news about the Messiah requires, which is the same good news that
you say you believe. They will honor God also because you generously share what you have
with them and with all believers. 14 Further, they will want to see you as they pray for you,
since you give very graciously as God enables you to. 15 We thank God for giving us these
things that are more wonderful than we can say!

10 1 Now I will speak about myself, Paul. I am humbly and reasonably urging you to do
what is right, just like the Messiah was humble and reasonable. Some people say that when I was
with you in person, I was gentle with you, but now, when I am away, I am forceful with you.
2 I do intend to be forceful when I boldly act against these people who think that I and those
who serve with me act in merely human ways. So, I ask you to do what is right so that I will not
need to be forceful with you too when I visit you. 3 In fact, although we act as humans, we do
not defend ourselves in merely human ways. 4 In fact, what we use to defend ourselves is not
what humans normally use. Rather, God empowers what we use to defend ourselves so that we
can defeat what other people powerfully argue. 5 We also defeat anything that people claim is
greater than knowing God. Further, we work to influence everything that people think so that
they obey the Messiah. 6 At the time when you fully obey the Messiah, we will be ready to
punish anyone who disobeys him.

7 Think about what is obvious. Suppose that people are sure that they represent the
Messiah. Those people need to remember that we too represent the Messiah, just like they do.
8 Indeed, I do not disgrace myself when I say many great things about how the Lord Jesus has
empowered us to represent him. He did that so that we could encourage and help you to trust

God more, not so that we could discourage you from trusting God. 9 So, you can tell that I am not trying to scare you when I send forceful letters to you. 10 I write that because some people say about me, "He sends severe and powerful letters to us, but he is feeble and speaks very poorly when he is with us." 11 People who say those things need to realize that what we write in our letters to you when we are not with you is also how we act when we are with you.

12 We are too humble to say that we are as good as people you know who say that they are trustworthy. Those people are foolish. When they say that they are great, they are looking only at themselves. 13 In contrast, we do not say great things about ourselves beyond what we actually do. Rather, we say great things about ourselves that match with what God has given us to do. That includes what we do whenever we are with you. 14 In fact, only if we had not actually visited you would what God has given us to do not include you. Of course, we really have already visited you and told you the good news about the Messiah.

15 We do not say great things about ourselves because of what others do but because of what we actually do. In fact, we confidently expect that God will give us even more to do with you. That will happen when you trust God more. 16 That way, we can tell the good news to people who live even further away from us than you do. That is what we plan to do instead of saying great things about ourselves because of how other people have done what God has given them to do. 17 Everyone should do what the prophet Jeremiah wrote,

"Anyone who says great things should say them about the Lord God."

18 Everyone should do that because the Lord Jesus recommends those whom he says are trustworthy, not those who say that about themselves.

11 1 Next, I hope that you will be patient with me as I say a few things that I consider foolish. I know that you are patient with me! 2 I will say foolish things because I am protective of you as God is protective of you. In fact, when I told you the good news, I was like a father who promised to give you to a man as his wife. Just like this father wants his daughter to be with only this one man, so I want you to trust only in the Messiah. 3 However, I fear that someone will trick you, just as Satan cleverly tricked Eve, the first woman. I fear that such a person will ruin how you think in ways that are completely loyal to the Messiah. 4 I fear for

you because I know that people visit you and tell you about Jesus, but it is not the same Jesus we told you about. Others offer you a spirit, but it is not the Holy Spirit that we offered to you. Others proclaim good news to you, but it is not the same good news that you first believed. Despite that, you are very patient when people tell you about these things.

5 I want you to believe what we first told you because I think that the Messiah acts through me as much as through those who say that they represent him the best. 6 Although I have not learned how to speak very well, despite that, I have learned to know what is true. I show you that this is true whenever I say or do anything.

7 You know that I did not sin against you when I did not ask you to pay me for proclaiming to you the good news from God. By doing that, I made myself less important to make you more important. 8 In fact, I received money from other groups of believers. I accepted their money so that I could serve you. 9 Further, when I was with you, I did not have everything that I needed. However, I did not bother any of you by asking for money. I could do that because our fellow believers who traveled with me from Macedonia province gave me everything that I needed. Indeed, in every situation, I did not and never will bother you by asking for money for myself. 10 No one who lives in any part of Achaia province will be able to keep me from saying great things about how I did not bother you. What I am saying is as true as if the Messiah were saying it. 11 My reason for not bothering you is not that I do not care for you. God can testify that I do care for you.

12 Rather, here is my reason for why I will continue not to bother you. That way, I can prevent anyone from being able to say such great things about themselves as we say about ourselves. I know that some people want to do this. 13 Those people are not really those whom the Messiah sent to represent him. They deceive people with what they do, and they can only pretend to represent the Messiah. 14 That should not surprise us. The devil also pretends to be a glorious spiritual being. 15 So then, we should expect those who serve him also to pretend to help people become righteous. God will eventually give them what they deserve in proportion to what they have done.

16 I repeat what I said earlier: I do not want anyone to think that I am foolish. However, if you do think that I am foolish, you should at least allow me to act in foolish ways. That way, I too can say a few great things about myself. 17 What I am about to say is not how I speak

when I am representing the Lord Jesus. Rather, I am about to speak foolishly as I prove that I can say great things about myself. 18 Many other people say great things about themselves in merely human ways. So, I too will say great things about myself. 19 I know that you will listen to me, because you consider yourselves to be wise people, so you are happy to be patient with other people who act foolishly. 20 In fact, you are patient when people treat you badly. They may force you to obey them. They may use up what you have. They may cheat you. They may say they are better than you. They may insult you. However, you are still patient with them. 21 If that is the right way for powerful people to treat you, then I admit that how we acted when we were with you shames us and proves that we are weak. On the other hand, whatever other people dare to do, I too can dare to do. Of course, I say these things only because I am acting foolishly. 22 Those people say they are Jews who speak Hebrew, but I also am a Jew and speak Hebrew. They say they are Israelites, but I also am an Israelite. They say they are descendants of Abraham, but I also am a descendant of Abraham. 23 They say they serve the Messiah, but I serve the Messiah even more. Of course, I am talking like a crazy person. However, I have worked harder than they have. People have put me in jail more than them. People have struck me very many times. I have almost died many times. 24 Five different times Jewish leaders had someone strike me the maximum number of times: 39. 25 Three different times leaders had someone repeatedly hit me with a stick. One time people threw stones at me to kill me. Three different times the ship I was sailing in sank. I have survived for 24 hours in the middle of the ocean. 26 I travel frequently. I go through dangerous places, including rivers, towns, deserts, and oceans. There are always people who could hurt me, including thieves, Jewish people, non-Jewish people, and people who pretend to be fellow believers. 27 I work very hard. I frequently do not sleep much. I do not have enough to eat or drink. I frequently go hungry. I sometimes freeze and do not have enough clothing. 28 Besides everything else that I could mention, I anxiously think daily about all the groups of believers. 29 When a fellow believer is feeble, I am feeble. When someone causes a fellow believer to sin, I become very angry.

30 Since I need to say great things about myself, I intend to say great things about how feeble I am. 31 We all will forever honor the God and Father of the Lord Jesus. He can testify that what I am saying is true.

32 When I was in Damascus city, the local ruler who served King Aretas had soldiers looking for me in the city to capture me. 33 However, fellow believers helped me get away from the local ruler. They put me in a large basket, attached it to a rope, and let it down through an opening in the city wall.

12 1 I need to say great things about myself. So, although it is not helpful, I am moving on to speak about how the Lord Jesus specially shows things to specific people. 2 Fourteen years ago, God took a certain Christian to the third level of heaven. I am not sure whether God took him there physically or in a dream or spiritually. Only God can be sure how it happened. 3 Now I will tell you more about that specific Christian. Again, I am not sure whether God took him to the third level of heaven physically or in a dream or spiritually. Only God can be sure how it happened. 4 God took that person into Paradise, the place in heaven where dead believers are. There, he heard amazing things that he cannot repeat to anyone. 5 I could say great things about that, since the person I have been talking about is me. However, I will only say great things about how feeble I am. 6 In fact, suppose that I did want to say great things about myself. Since I am speaking truthfully, I would still not be acting foolishly. However, I decide not to say great things about myself. That way, people can only characterize me by what they observe me saying and doing. 7 So then, in order that I might not become proud because God revealed such great things to me, he allowed me to suffer. Specifically, a spiritual being whom Satan sent made me suffer. That way, I might not become proud. 8 I asked the Lord Jesus three different times to make me stop suffering in that way. 9 He responded by saying to me, "When I act kindly to you, that is all you need. In fact, I make people fully powerful when they are feeble." Therefore, I will most happily say more great things about how feeble I am. That way, the Messiah will always enable me to act powerfully. 10 So then, I am happy when bad things happen to me because I serve the Messiah. This includes when I am feeble, when people say bad things about me, when people hurt me, when people persecute me, and when I struggle. I am happy because God empowers me when I am feeble.

11 I have been speaking foolishly, which is what you forced me to do. You forced me because you should be saying that I am trustworthy, but you are not saying that. You should be saying that because I am just as great as any people who say that they represent the Messiah the best. That is true even though I am not great at all. 12 I persevered in acting in the ways that

prove to you that I really am one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. I did powerful and amazing things. **13** Further, I did not treat you like you were less important than any other group of believers. The only way **I acted differently with you** was that I did not bother you **by asking you for money**. If that was actually wrong, please forgive me for doing it!

14 Pay attention! I am about to visit you for the third time. Yet again, I will not bother you **by asking for money**. **That is** because I want you **to trust me and the Messiah**. **I do not want** the things that you have. In fact, since I am like your parent, I should be saving money for you. Further, since you are like my children, you should not be saving money for me. **15** I will most happily do and experience anything to help you. When I love you more **than I did before**, you should not love me less **than you did before**.

16 You can agree, then, that I personally did not bother you **by asking for money**. However, perhaps I am a clever person. **Maybe** I somehow tricked you into giving me **money**.
17 **However,** I have not had anyone visit you who has acted for me by cheating you. **18** **For example,** I asked Titus **to visit you**, and I had a fellow believer go with him. **You know that** Titus did not cheat you. He and I live the same way and do the same things.

19 You should know that the reason why we have said these things is not to explain to you that I and those who serve with me are trustworthy. Rather, as those whom God has united to the Messiah, we have been saying what pleases God. Of course, **fellow believers** whom we love, we intend everything we say and do to help you grow. **20** **I have said these things** because I am concerned about **what will happen** when I visit. **I am concerned that** I will discover that you are not acting as I want **you to act** and that you will discover that I am not acting as you want **me to act**. **I am concerned** that you may be fighting **with each other**, being jealous **of each other**, being angry **with each other**, trying to control **each other**, saying bad things **about each other**, telling false stories **about others**, saying great things about yourselves, or stirring up crowds **against each other**. **21** **I am concerned** about **what will happen** when I visit you this third time. God may make me ashamed about you. Further, I may feel very sad about many people who have previously done what is wrong and have not stopped having improper sex.

13 **1** **The scripture says:** “At least two or three witnesses must say the same thing **about someone** before we can believe that it is true.” **Be aware that** the next time that I visit you will be the third time **that I will be a witness to what you are doing**. **2** When I visited you the second

time, I warned all of you that I was going to punish everyone among you who had been sinning. And now I am warning you again while I am still away from you. When I visit you this third time, I will punish everyone who has been sinning. 3 I tell you this because you have demanded that I prove to you that the Messiah is speaking to you when I speak to you. You will know this when he disciplines you. He will not be weak with you; instead, he will work powerfully among you. 4 You see, as a man, the Messiah allowed himself to be weak when people nailed him to a cross. But God is powerful, and he has made him alive again. We, too, are weak human beings, as he was. But God also works powerfully in us to make us live as the Messiah does, so we will work powerfully among you.

5 Each of you should ask yourself: "Do I trust the Messiah and live as he directs me?" Each of you should test yourself in this way. Then you will know that you truly live as one with Jesus the Messiah. That is true unless, of course, you fail this test. 6 As for us, I am certain that you will understand that we have passed the test. 7 We pray to God that you may not be doing any bad things. We pray for this, not because we want people to consider that we have been successful in disciplining you, but so that you would be doing good things. We want this for you even if it means that people consider that we have failed because you did not need us. 8 We want you to do good things even if then we cannot discipline you and appear to be powerful because we must obey God's true message. We cannot do anything that contradicts God's true message. 9 We are happy when people think that we are weak, because you are strong in obeying God without needing discipline from us. This is the very thing that we pray for, that you may decide to trust and obey God completely. 10 It is because I want you to trust and obey God completely that I am writing to you about these things while I am apart from you. Then when I come to you, I will not have to discipline you severely. The Lord has empowered me to represent him, but he did that so that I could encourage and help you to trust God more, not so that I could discourage you from trusting God.

11 Here are the last things that I want to say to you, my fellow believers. Be joyful! Live in the way that God wants you to live. Let the things that I have said to you encourage you to trust God more. Agree with each other about the important things. Live peacefully with each other. If you do these things, God will be with you. He is the one who enables you to love and to be peaceful with others. 12 Greet each other affectionately in a way that is appropriate for those who are members of God's family. All of God's people here send greetings to you.

13 May the Lord Jesus the Messiah act kindly toward you, may God love you, and may the Holy Spirit be with you and join you all together.

Galatians

1 **1** I, Paul, write this letter to you. **I remind you that** God sent me to represent him. That is not because a group of people appointed me, nor because a human being sent me to be an apostle. Instead, I am an apostle because Jesus the Messiah and God the Father have appointed and sent me to be an apostle—yes, God the Father, who made the Messiah alive again after he died! **2** All the fellow believers who are here with me **approve of this message that I am writing**. I am sending this letter to the congregations that are in the province of Galatia. **3** **May** God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah **continue to be** kind to you and **make you** peaceful. **4** The Messiah offered himself as a sacrifice in order that he might remove the guilt for the sinful things we have done. He did that in order that he might enable us to not do the evil things that people who do not know him do. He did this because God, who is our Father, wanted it.
5 **Because that is true,** let us praise God forever and ever. May it be so!

6 I am very disappointed that so soon after you trusted in the Messiah you are turning away from God. God chose you to be in a relationship that is based on the kindness of the Messiah. I am also disappointed that so soon you are believing a different message which some say is "good news." **7** Their message is not a true message. What is happening is that certain persons are confusing your minds. They are desiring to change the good news about the Messiah and are creating another message. **8** But even if we apostles or an angel from heaven would tell you a message that is different from the good news that we told you before, I appeal to God that he would punish such a person forever. **9** As we told you previously, so now I tell you this once more: Someone is telling you what he says is good news, but it is a message that is different from the good news that I gave you. So I appeal to God that he eternally condemn that person. **10** I said that because I do not desire that people approve me, contrary to what some people have said about me. It is God whom I desire to approve me. Specifically, I do not say and do things just to please people. If it were still people whom I was trying to please, then I would not be one who willingly and completely serves the Messiah.

11 My fellow believers, I want you to know that the message about the Messiah that I proclaim to people is not one that some person created. **12** I was not given this good news by a human being, and no human being taught it to me. Instead, it was God who revealed Jesus the Messiah to me.

13 People have told you how I used to behave when I practiced the Jewish religion. They told you that I continually did very harmful things to the groups of believers belonging to God, and they told you that I tried to get rid of those people. **14** I was practicing the Jewish religion more thoroughly than many other Jews who were my age were practicing it. I was also trying much more enthusiastically to get others to obey the traditions that my ancestors kept.
15 Nevertheless, before I was born God selected me for a special task and he kindly chose me. When God thought that it was good, **16** he showed me who his Son really is. He did this so that I would tell others the good news about his Son in regions where the non-Jews live. But I did not immediately go to any human beings in order to gain an understanding of that message.
17 I also did not immediately leave Damascus and go to Jerusalem **for that purpose** to those who were representatives of Jesus before I was. Rather, I went away into the region of Arabia**, a desert area**. Later I returned once more to the city of Damascus. **18** Then three years after **God revealed this good news to me,** I went up to the city of Jerusalem in order that I might meet Peter. **But** I remained with him for **only** fifteen days. **19** I also saw James, the brother and representative of our Lord Jesus, but I did not see any other representatives of Jesus. **20** God knows that what I am writing to you is completely true! **21** After I left Jerusalem, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** At that time people in the Christian congregations who were in the province of Judea still had not met me personally **23** They only heard others say about me repeatedly, “Paul, the one who in the past was doing harmful things to us, is now telling the same message which we believe and which formerly he was trying to cause people to stop believing!” **24** So they kept praising God because he had caused me to believe in Jesus and because I was now telling people the good news about him.

2 **1** After fourteen years passed, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas. I also took Titus. **2** I went up there because of what God revealed to me. **It was not because someone asked me to come.** I told people the content of the good news that I preach to non-Jews. But I spoke privately to those whom your new teachers highly respect so that what I was doing and what I

had done might not become useless. That could have happened if people rejected my message because they thought that I was teaching falsely, **which could have happened if the leaders in Jerusalem would have disagreed with my message**. **3** But those leaders did not even require Titus, who was with me and was an uncircumcised Gentile, to be circumcised. **4** But this problem occurred because **some people demanded that Titus be circumcised** after they had successfully pretended that they were fellow believers and associated with the true believers. They associated with the true believers in order that they might observe closely what we do because we are free from having to obey all the Jewish laws and rituals because of our close relationship with the Messiah Jesus. Those people wanted to make us like slaves of those rituals **by convincing us that we cannot trust the Messiah solely but that we must also obey all the Jewish laws and rituals**. **5** But not even briefly did we do what they wanted regarding circumcision. We resisted them in order that you might continue to have, and benefit from, the true, correct, and unmodified good news. **6** The leaders in Jerusalem, whom your new teachers respect, did not add anything to what I proclaim. And I would add that what status those leaders had did not influence me, because God does not favor important and powerful persons more than others. **7** Instead **of those leaders adding to the content of the message that I tell people,** they understood that God had given me the good news so that I might proclaim it to the non-Jews, just like God had given the good news to Peter so that he might tell it to those who are Jews. **8** That is, just like God had authorized and empowered Peter in order that he might be a representative of Jesus to take God's message to the Jews, he also had authorized and empowered me in order that I might be a representative of Jesus to take God's message to the non-Jews. **9** Those leaders knew that God had kindly given to me this special mission. So James, Peter, and John, the ones whom your new teachers respect because they are leaders of the believers, shook hands with us to show that they agreed that Barnabas and I are serving the Lord just like they are, and that we are preaching the same message that they are preaching. They also agreed that we are the ones whom God was sending to tell his message to non-Jews, but that God is sending them to tell his message to Jews. **10** They only urged us to still remember to help the poor among the fellow believers who live in Jerusalem. That is exactly what I have been eager to do.

11 But later, Peter became guilty of doing wrong things. This happened while he was visiting us in the city of Antioch. So I confronted him directly about those things. **12** This is what happened: Peter had been eating with the non-Jewish believers there. But then some men

came who were from the group of Jewish believers in Jerusalem that James was leading. These men said that believers should keep the Jewish laws. Peter was afraid of what people who want Jewish believers to keep the Jewish laws might do, and so he began to withdraw from the non-Jews and eat with only the Jewish believers. **13** Also, the other Jewish believers who were in Antioch acted in a way that they knew was not right, along with Peter, when they separated themselves from the non-Jewish believers. The result was that they convinced even Barnabas to stop associating with the non-Jewish believers! **14** I had realized that they were not acting forthrightly and in a manner that was consistent with the correct facts and teachings of the good news about the Messiah. So when all the fellow believers had come together, I told Peter the following: "Although you are a Jew, you often conduct yourself like non-Jews do by disregarding Jewish laws about food. When you are among non-Jews, you do not customarily conduct yourself at all like Jews do. So, now it is wrong that you are causing non-Jews to think that they must obey all the Jewish rituals and customs! **15** We were born as Jews. We were not born as non-Jews. We Jews have always considered non-Jews to be 'sinners' because they do not obey the Jewish rituals and laws. **16** But we Jewish believers now know that it is not because some person obeys those things that God commanded in the laws he gave the Jews that God makes a person righteous. God makes a person righteous only if that person trusts in the Messiah Jesus. So even we Jews have trusted the Messiah Jesus. We did that so God would declare us good in his sight, because we trust the Messiah, and not because we try to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. We did that because God has said that he will not declare anyone good in his sight just because they obey those laws. **17** Furthermore, because we Jewish believers desired that God would make us righteous because of our relationship with the Messiah, it means that we ourselves, like non-Jews whom we called sinners, also disobeyed the laws and rituals that God gave Moses. But we certainly cannot conclude that it is the Messiah who causes us to sin. No, the Messiah certainly does not cause anyone to sin.

18 If I again believed that God would make me righteous because of my obeying the laws that he gave to Moses, I would be like a man who rebuilds an old building that he had torn down. If I did that I would show that I was guilty of acting wrongly. **19** I realized that God would not regard me as righteous because I tried to obey the laws that he gave to Moses. So I have decided not to respond to what those laws demand, just like a dead person does not respond to anything. I decided to do this so that I may now live to serve God. It is as though I was with the Messiah when he died on the cross. **20** My old way of living ended since I began believing in the Messiah. No longer am I directing the way I behave as I did before I believed

in the Messiah. Now the Messiah is directing how I behave. And whatever I do now while I live in my earthly body, I do it by trusting in God's Son. He is the one who loved me and offered himself as a sacrifice for me. 21 I am not rejecting as useless what God kindly did for me, as my opponents are doing. If God considers people to be righteous because they obey the laws that he gave to Moses, then the Messiah died needlessly!"

3 1 You fellow believers who live in Galatia are acting mindlessly! Someone must have put an evil spell on you! I clearly explained to you what Jesus the Messiah accomplished when he died on the cross. 2 So, I want to tell you this one thing: God did not give you his Holy Spirit because you obeyed the laws that he gave Moses. Surely you must know that the reason he gave you his Holy Spirit is because when you heard the good news about the Messiah you believed it. 3 You are acting very foolishly! You first became Christians because God's Spirit enabled you. So, you should not now think that it is because of what you do by obeying the laws God gave Moses that you will continue to grow spiritually. 4 Keep in mind that if what God has done for you was because of your obeying the laws that God gave to Moses and not because of trusting in the Messiah then you suffered many things needlessly! I certainly hope that you did not suffer like that needlessly. 5 So then, when God now generously gives to you his Spirit and performs mighty deeds among you, it is not because you obey the laws that God gave to Moses? Surely you know it is because when you heard the good news about the Messiah you believed it!

6 What you have experienced is just as Moses had written in the scriptures about Abraham. He wrote that Abraham trusted God, and as a result, God considered Abraham as being righteous. 7 You must realize, therefore, that it is those who trust in what the Messiah has done who are like Abraham's descendants because they trust in God as Abraham did. 8 Furthermore, God planned beforehand that it was when non-Jews trusted him that he would consider them righteous. Moses wrote in the Scriptures this good message that God told Abraham: "Through you, I will bless people in all nations." 9 So, we can conclude that it is those who trust in what the Messiah has done whom God blesses along with Abraham, the one who trusted him long ago. 10 That is, God will eternally punish all those who mistakenly think that God will consider them righteous as a result of their trying to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. What Moses wrote in the Scriptures is that God will eternally punish everyone who does not continuously and completely obey all the laws that God instructed him to write in the Book of

the Law. **11** God does not regard any person as righteous as a result of their trying to obey the laws that he gave to Moses. This is evident since the Scriptures say, "Every righteous person lives spiritually as a result of their trusting God." **12** But when God gave his laws to the Jews, he did not make them dependent upon a person believing in him. Instead God said that it is those who obey all God's laws, continuously and completely, who will live through obeying them.

13 Even though we humans have not continuously and completely obeyed God's laws, the Messiah rescued us from God punishing us eternally. The Messiah rescued us by his being the one God condemned instead of God condemning us. What Moses wrote in the Scriptures shows that this is true. He wrote, "God has cursed anyone whom people have executed for his crimes by hanging his body on a tree." **14** The Messiah rescued us in order that as a result of what he has done, God might bless the non-Jews, in a way similar to the way God blessed Abraham. The reason for this is that as a result of our trusting in the Messiah, we all might receive the Holy Spirit whom God promised to give to us.

15 My fellow believers, I will now illustrate by referring to human relationships. After two people have signed an agreement, no one can reject it or add to it. **16** God declared to Abraham and his descendant that he was promising to give blessings to Abraham. The words that God spoke were not "and your descendants." He was not referring to many persons. Instead, he was referring to one person, who is the Messiah, because the words that God spoke were, "and your descendant." **17** This is what I am saying: God established an agreement with Abraham that the laws which he gave to the Jews 430 years later could not cancel. **18** I want you to know that if it is because we obey the laws God gave to the Jews that he gives to us what he has promised to give to us, then he would not be giving it because he had promised to do so. However, God kindly gave to Abraham what he had promised to give to him, just because God had promised that he would give it to him. Similarly, it is not because we obey God's laws that God kindly gives to us what he has promised to give to us.

19 So, if someone should ask, "Why did God later give his laws to Moses?" I would reply that it was in order that people might realize how sinful they were. Those laws were valid until Jesus came. He was the descendant that God was referring to when he made the promises to Abraham. God gave his laws to Moses by God's causing angels to speak to him. Moses was the mediator, the one who told the laws to the people. **20** Now, when a mediator functions, one

person is not speaking with another directly; but God himself made his promises directly to Abraham.

21 If someone should ask, “When God gave his laws to Moses long after he told Abraham what he was promising to give to him, was he changing his mind?” **I would reply that** God certainly did not change his mind when he did that! If God had given a law that could enable people to live **eternally and spiritually**, then it certainly would be because of people obeying that law that God would consider people righteous. **22** But, **in fact, it is impossible for the law to enable people to live eternally or spiritually.** Instead, the law given in the Scriptures caused all people to be unable to escape being punished for their sins, just like people in prison are unable to escape. **God did that** in order that he might give what he promised to those who trust Jesus Christ, just because they trust him. **23** Before God revealed the good news about trusting in the Messiah, the laws that God gave to Moses were confining us, as a prisoner in jail is confined. This happened until the time we might believe the good news concerning the Messiah, the good news that God was about to reveal **and now has**. **24** Like a father supervises his immature child by appointing a servant to take care of that child, God was supervising us by his laws until the Messiah **came**. **He did this** in order that he might now declare us righteous in his sight **only** because we trust in the Messiah. **25** But now that God has revealed the message about trusting in the Messiah, the laws that God gave to Moses no longer supervise us.

26 Now all of you **Jews and non-Jews** are **as though you are** God’s children because you trust in the Messiah Jesus. You are **now** in close spiritual union with the Messiah Jesus **because you believe in Him**. **27** That is, you who **began a relationship with the Messiah when you** were baptized identified yourselves with Christ. **28** If you believe in the Messiah, it does not matter to God if you are Jews or non-Jews; slaves or ones who are not slaves; males or females, because all of you are as one sort of person because of your relationship with the Messiah Jesus. **29** Furthermore, since you belong to the Messiah, you are **like** Abraham’s descendants because you trust God as Abraham did, and you will possess what God promised Abraham.

4 **1** Now, I will further discuss children and heirs. An heir is a person who will later possess and control all that his father has. But as long as that heir is a child, others control him, with the result that he is just like a slave. **2** Until the day that his father has **previously** determined, other persons supervise the child and manage his property. **3** Likewise, when we were

spiritually immature **because we did not yet believe in the Messiah**, we submitted to the rules that everyone in this world lives by. Those rules controlled us like masters control their slaves.
4 But exactly at the time that God had previously determined, he sent Jesus his Son, into the world. **Jesus was** born to a human mother, and he had to obey the laws that God gave to Moses.
5 God sent Jesus to rescue us who had to obey God's laws he gave to Moses from being condemned for not obeying these laws. God did this so that we might all receive from him the status of being his children. **6** Furthermore, God sent the Spirit to live in our inner beings because we are now in such a close relationship with God it is as though we are his children. It is his Spirit who enables us to fervently call out **to God**, "Father, Father!" **7** So, because of what God has done, no longer is each of you like a slave. Instead, each of you is like a child of God. Furthermore, since each of you is now like God's child, God has also made each of you his heir, one to whom he will give all that he has promised.

8 When you did not have a relationship with God, you served gods that really did not exist. You were like slaves at that time, because you were in spiritual bondage. **9** But now you have come to intimately know God. Perhaps it would be better to say that now God intimately knows each of you. So now you are acting foolishly! You are again believing that by obeying rules and rites you will benefit spiritually! Those rules are ineffective and inadequate! You are wanting to obey them again like slaves obey their masters. **10** You non-Jews are carefully practicing Jewish rules and rituals regarding what you should do on Jewish special days and at special times in certain months, seasons, and years. **11** I am concerned about your mistaken ideas! I do not want to have so strenuously served you in vain. **12** My fellow believers, I strongly urge you that you do as I do. **Stop thinking that you have to obey the Jewish rules and ceremonial laws prescribed by the law of Moses.** When I was with you, I did not obey all the Jewish rules and ceremonial laws, just like you did not obey them. At that time you treated me entirely as you should have.

13 You remember that I originally told you the good news because I was physically weak **and was recovering**. Because of the opportunity which that sickness provided I was able to tell you the good news. **14** Although you might have treated me contemptuously because of my physical malady, you did not treat me contemptuously or reject me. Instead, you welcomed me like you would welcome an angel that came from God. You welcomed me like you would welcome the Messiah Jesus himself! **15** I am disappointed that you have forgotten that then

you declared that you were pleased with me. I know for certain that you would have done anything to help me. **16** So I am very disappointed that you now act as though I have become hostile to you because I have kept speaking the true message about the Messiah to you.
17 Those who are insisting on obeying the Jewish laws are eagerly showing interest in you, but they are not doing this because they have good motives. They are doing this because they want you not to associate with me and others who teach what is true about the Messiah. They desire that instead of you associating with us, you will eagerly show interest in them, not in us.
18 But, it is an honorable thing to eagerly desire to do the right things at all times. I would like you to eagerly desire to do the right things, both when I am with you and when I am absent.
19 You who are like my children, once again I am very concerned about you, and I will continue to be concerned about you until you become like the Messiah in your thinking and in your conduct. **20** But I do wish that I could be with you now and that I might talk more gently with you, because right now I do not know what to do about you.

21 Some of you desire to obey all the laws that God gave Moses. I say that you should consider the implications of what Moses wrote in the Scriptures. **22** He wrote that Abraham became the father of two sons. His female slave, Hagar, bore one son, and his wife Sarah, who was not a slave, bore the other. **23** Also, the sons differed. Ishmael, the son born by Hagar, the female slave, was conceived naturally. But Isaac, the son born by Sarah, his wife who was not a slave, was conceived miraculously because God intervened in order to fulfill what he had promised Abraham. **24** I am telling you this as an illustration. These two women symbolize two agreements. God made the first agreement, which involved obeying the laws that God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai. Because that agreement forces those who accept it to keep obeying all its rules, it is like a slave mother who gives birth to slaves. So Hagar, the female slave, symbolizes this agreement. **25** Also Hagar symbolizes the agreement, with its laws and rituals, that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, in the land of Arabia. Hagar also symbolizes the Jewish religion. The Jewish religion is like a slave mother, and those who practice the Jewish religion are like slave children because they all must obey the laws that God gave to Moses. **26** But there is a heavenly Jerusalem, and because we belong to the heavenly Jerusalem, it is like a mother to all of us **who believe in the Messiah**. Those who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem are free from having to obey the laws of Moses and free from being condemned for failing to obey those laws. **27** Our new city will have more people than those who live in Jerusalem now. It will be just like Isaiah foretold **about the people whom he expected**

would come back to Jerusalem from exile. He expected that they would be more numerous than those who were taken into exile. He wrote: You who live in Jerusalem, you will rejoice! Now you have no children, like a barren woman who does not give birth to children! But some day you will shout joyfully, as loudly as you can, even though now you are few in number, like a woman who cannot give birth to children, and you feel deserted. You will be very happy because you will have many children who will come to you. Those children will be more than the children any woman with a husband could have borne. **28** Now, my fellow believers, you have become children of God because God has fulfilled what he promised to Abraham. You are like Isaac, who was born because God fulfilled what he promised to give Abraham. **29** Also, long ago Abraham's son Ishmael, the one who was conceived naturally, caused trouble for Abraham's son Isaac, who was conceived supernaturally. Similarly, now those who think that we must obey the laws that God gave to Moses in order that God will save us are causing trouble for those who are trusting Abraham's descendant, the Messiah. **30** But Moses wrote these words in a scripture passage in Genesis: "The son of the woman who was not a slave will inherit what his father owns. The female slave's son will certainly not inherit those things. So send away from this place the female slave and her son!" **31** My fellow believers, Hagar symbolizes the laws that God gave to Moses. But we are not those who must obey all the laws that God gave to Moses. So we are not the female slave Hagar's spiritual descendants. But Sarah's descendants are those who were born as a result of God fulfilling what he promised to Abraham. So we are the spiritual descendants of Sarah, the woman who was not a slave.

5 **1** The Messiah freed us believers from having to obey the laws God gave the Jews in order that we would not have to obey them. So continue to be steadfastly committed to the Lord. Do not let anyone force you to obey those laws again as if you were slaves to those laws. **2** I am Paul. Pay attention to what I am telling you! If you let anyone circumcise you, what the Messiah has done for you will not help you at all! **3** Once again I solemnly declare to every man who has someone circumcise him, that he must obey all of the laws God gave the Jews in order to be righteous. **4** You who are trying to make yourselves righteous by obeying the laws God gave the Jews have separated yourselves from the Messiah. God will no longer act kindly toward you. **5** This is so because we believers are confidently expecting by trusting in Jesus that God will make us righteous. The Holy Spirit enables us to do this. **6** This is so because when God has united us with the Messiah Jesus, whether people are circumcised or not is not

important. Rather, only whether we trust in the Messiah is important. We show we trust in the Messiah by loving others.

7 You were spiritually progressing so well! You should never have let someone stop you from progressing, so that what is true does not convince you! 8 God is the one who calls you. He is not the one who is persuading you to think like this! 9 This false teaching might deceive all of you, just like a little yeast in some dough makes all of it swell up. 10 Because God has united us with the Lord Jesus, I am certain that you will believe only what I have told you. By contrast, God will certainly punish everyone who is confusing you about these things, whoever they are. 11 Fellow believers, as for me, were I to still declare that men must have someone circumcise them in order to be righteous, surely no one would still be persecuting me! This is because declaring that would abolish how offensive Jesus dying on the cross is. 12 O that those who are upsetting you would just castrate themselves!

13 Fellow believers, God has called you to free you from having to obey the laws God gave the Jews. But he did not free you from those laws so you could sin. Instead of sinning, serve each other by loving each other! 14 Do this because one command summarizes all the laws God gave the Jews. That command is, "Love each person as much as you love yourself." 15 Now if you keep attacking and harming each other like wild animals, beware that you might completely destroy each other.

16 I am telling you to let the Holy Spirit lead you. If you do that, you will definitely not do what your sinful selves want to do. 17 This is because your sinful selves want to do what is contrary to what the Holy Spirit wants to do. Also, what the Holy Spirit wants to do is contrary to what your sinful selves want to do. This is because they are always against each other. The result is that you do not always do the good things that you truly want to do. 18 However, if the Holy Spirit leads you, the laws God gave the Jews do not control you.

19 You clearly know what people do because of their sinful selves. They do sexually immoral acts, impure acts, and unrestrained immoral acts. 20 They also worship false gods, do witchcraft, repeatedly act in hostile ways, quarrel with people, act jealously, behave angrily, act ambitiously, act divisively within a group of people, and make divisive groups of people. 21 They also envy others, get drunk, celebrate drunkenly, and do other sinful things like these. I

warn you now about doing these sinful things, just like I warned you previously: anyone who regularly does these sinful things will not participate in God's kingdom. 22 Yet the Holy Spirit enables us believers in the Messiah to love others and be joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, 23 gentle, and to control ourselves. There is no law that prohibits people from doing these good things. 24 We who belong to the Messiah Jesus have stopped doing what our sinful selves feel and want to do.

25 Since the Holy Spirit has made us spiritually alive, we must let the Holy Spirit lead us.
26 Do not boast. Do not make each other angry. Do not envy each other.

6 1 Fellow believers, if you discover that another believer does something wrong, those of you who are spiritually mature should gently correct that person. While doing so, you should be very careful so that you do not sin as well. 2 Help each other overcome the problems you have. By doing that, you will obey what the Messiah commands. 3 I say this because people who wrongly think that they are better than others trick themselves into believing what is not true.
4 Instead, each of you should constantly evaluate what you do. Only then might you be able to rightly boast about what you have done on your own instead of wrongly boasting about what someone else has done. 5 I say this because each one of you must do what God has given you to do.

6 If fellow believers teach you what God has said, then you must share what you have with them. 7 Do not trick yourselves: No one can scorn God! This is because, just like a farmer will harvest exactly the kind of crop that he plants, people will experience the results of what they have done. 8 Those who do what their sinful selves want to do will experience the result of doing so. God will punish them forever. But those who please the Holy Spirit will experience the result of doing so. The Holy Spirit will enable them to live forever with God. 9 Let us not tire of doing what is good, because at the right time we will experience the good result of what we do. This will happen if we do not stop doing these good things. 10 Therefore, let us do what is good to everyone whenever we can. Let us especially do what is good to all our fellow believers in Jesus.

11 I am writing this to you in my own handwriting. Notice how large the letters are!
12 Everyone who wants to impress the Jews with how they appear outwardly is trying to force
you to have someone circumcise you. They only do this in order to prevent the Jews from
persecuting them for believing that the Messiah Jesus died on the cross to save us. **13** I say this
because not even those people whom someone has circumcised obey the laws God gave the
Jews. Rather, they want to circumcise you in order to boast because of how you appear
outwardly. **14** As for me, I will ever only boast about our Lord Jesus the Messiah dying on the
cross to save us! Because Jesus died on the cross, the sinful world has become like a dead
person to me, and I have become like a dead person to the sinful world. **15** I may boast about
Jesus dying on the cross because whether people are circumcised or not is not important. Rather,
the Holy Spirit making them new people is important. **16** I pray that God will make peaceful
everyone who behaves in this way and will act kindly to them. I also pray these things for those
Israelites who trust in Jesus and belong to God!

17 I have scars on my body because I declared the truth about Jesus. So do not let anyone
bother me about these matters again!

18 Fellow believers, I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will be gracious to all of you!
May it be so!

Ephesians

1 **1** I am Paul. The Messiah Jesus sent me to represent him because that is what God wanted. I write this letter to the people whom God has set apart for himself who are living [in the city of Ephesus][19] and who are loyal to the Messiah Jesus. **2** May God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

3 Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! He has blessed us with every kind of spiritual blessing that comes from heaven because we belong to the Messiah. **4** In fact, even before God created the world, he chose us to belong to the Messiah, so that the Messiah could make us completely holy for him. Because God loves us, **5** he decided long ago to adopt us as his own children by means of Jesus the Messiah. It pleased him to do this, so he did what he wanted to do. **6** Because of this, we now praise God for being so amazingly kind to us, far beyond what we could deserve, as he blessed us by means of his Son whom he loves.

7 When Jesus died in our place, he paid the price for our sin. That is, when he died for us, God forgave us our sins because that is how abundantly and generously kind he is. **8** God knew that we would need him to be extremely kind to us in this way because God knows everything and is completely wise. **9** In this way, God has now revealed to us his plan that he had not revealed to anyone before—a plan that he was pleased to accomplish through the work of the Messiah. **10** In this plan, when the time was just right, the Messiah would unite all things under himself so that all things in heaven and all things on earth would belong to the Messiah. **11** Because of what the Messiah has done, God has also claimed us as his own. He planned to do this long ago, and he always does exactly what he wishes to do. **12** In God's plan, we Jews, who were the first to trust in the Messiah, would live to praise God because he is so great. **13** Then you non-Jews also heard the true message, the good news of how God saves you, and you believed in the Messiah. When you did that, God marked you as belonging to the Messiah by giving you the Holy Spirit, as he had promised to do. **14** The Holy Spirit is like a down payment that proves that God will also give to us everything else that he has

promised to give to us at that time when he will release everything that he has for us. Praise God because he is so great!

15 Because God has done all of this for you, and because people have told me how you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love all the believers, **16** I thank God for you constantly as I talk to God about you when I pray to him. **17** I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the glorious Father, will give you his Spirit to make you wise and to reveal God to you so that you can continually know him better. **18** I pray that God may enable you to see things as they truly are so that you may know the wonderful plan that God has for us because he has called us to be his people. I pray that you may know how wonderful and abundant are the things he promises to give to us and to all the believers. **19** And I pray that you will know how exceedingly powerfully God acts for us who believe in the Messiah. He is just as powerfully strong for us **20** as he was for the Messiah when he caused the Messiah to become alive again after he died, and raised him to the place of highest honor in heaven. **21** The Messiah rules as supreme there over every ruler and powerful spirit on every level of authority and over every being that people revere. He rules over them not only now, but forever. **22** God has made everything to be subject to the Messiah and has appointed the Messiah as the ruler over everything among all believers everywhere. **23** We believers relate to the Messiah as the parts of a person's body relate to its head. He supplies what is lacking for all believers just as he completes everything everywhere.

2 **1** Before you trusted the Messiah, you were spiritually dead—you were unable to stop sinning. **2** You used to live in a sinful way, guided by the spirit of this world. You were guided by the ruler of the evil spirits, who controls the authorities of this world. This ruler is Satan, who now works through the people who disobey God. **3** All of us used to live in the same way as these people who disobey God; we did the evil things that we desired, things that would bring pleasure to our bodies and our minds. We deserved that God should be very angry with us, just as he is with the other people.

4 But God is very merciful to us because he loves us very much. **5** God loved us so much that even when we were spiritually dead and constantly sinning, he made us alive by joining us to the Messiah. Remember, when God saved you from being spiritually dead, he was being

very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve. **6** God saved us from being spiritually dead just as he raised Jesus from being physically dead and he made us spiritually alive with him. Then he gave us seats of honor to rule with the Messiah Jesus in heaven. **7** He did that to show to everyone in all future times how exceedingly gracious he is in being kind to us by joining us to the Messiah Jesus.

8 So God was very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve when he saved you from being spiritually dead. He did this because you trust in Jesus. You have not saved yourselves; this is a gift from God— **9** a gift that no one can earn, so no one can boast and say that he has saved himself. **10** So God is making us what he wants us to be; through the Messiah Jesus he has created us as new people to do good things—things that God had previously arranged for us to do.

11 So remember that previously you non-Jewish people according to who your ancestors were did not belong to God's people. The Jews insulted you by calling you "the uncircumcised." They call themselves "the circumcised." By this they mean that they, not you, are God's people, although circumcision is something that humans do that only changes the body, not something that God does that changes the spirit. **12** Remember that, at that time, you were separated from the Messiah. You were foreigners to the people of Israel. You did not share in the things that God promised in his agreements with them. You did not confidently expect that God would save you. No, you were living in this world completely without God. **13** But now, because you have trusted in Jesus the Messiah, God has brought you into his family, even though before that you did not know him. This was possible because the Messiah died on the cross for you.

14 It is the Messiah who has made it possible for Jews and non-Jews to live peacefully with each other. He made the two separate groups into one group. The two groups hated each other, but he took away every reason for hating each other when he died for all of us. **15** He made it no longer necessary for us to obey the commandments and requirements of the Jewish law for him to accept us. He did this in order to make the Jews and the non-Jews into one new people who would live peacefully together because of their relationship to him. **16** He did this in order to reconcile both groups to God as one group by dying on the cross for all of them. By dying for them, Jesus made it possible for them to stop being enemies to each other and to God. **17** Jesus came and announced the good news that we can be at peace with God; he

announced this to you non-Jews, who did not know about God, and to us Jews, who did know about God. **18** Because of what Jesus did for us, both Jews and non-Jews now can come to God the Father with the help of God's Spirit.

19 Therefore now you non-Jews are no longer left out of God's people, but instead you are fellow members with those whom God has set apart for himself, and you belong to God's family. **20** You are like stones that God has put together into a building, and the apostles and prophets are like the foundation stones of that building. You depend on what they have taught, just as building stones depend on the foundation stones below them to form a wall that is upright and strong. The Messiah Jesus himself is like the cornerstone, which is the most important stone of the building. **21** Jesus determines where each person belongs, just as the cornerstone determines where each stone fits in the building. Just as a builder joins stones together to make a holy temple, Jesus is assembling his family of believers to be one holy group which serves the Lord. **22** Because you belong to Jesus, he is building you up together, both Jews and non-Jews, into one family that is like a building in which God lives by means of his Spirit.

3 **1** Because God is working out this plan for you non-Jews, I, Paul, pray to the Father for you, even as I am in prison because I serve the Messiah Jesus for your sake. **2** I assume that people have told you about me, that God has given me the task of communicating to you non-Jews his plan to be extremely kind to you. **3** God told me this message that people did not understand before by revealing it to me directly, just as I wrote to you before briefly. **4** As you read that, you can perceive that I clearly understand things that God had not previously revealed about the Messiah. **5** Formerly, God did not fully reveal this message to people, but now his Spirit has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. **6** The message is this: the non-Jews now share together with Jews the spiritual riches of God and belong to the same group of God's people and will share all the things God has promised to his people because they are joined to the Messiah Jesus as a result of believing the good news. **7** I now serve God by telling people this good news. God was very kind to me and gave me this work to do even though I am not worthy of it, and he enables me to do it by powerfully working in me.

8 Although I am the least worthy of all of God's people, God kindly gave me this gift: he appointed me to proclaim to the non-Jews the good news about the unending spiritual blessings

that the Messiah has for us [9] and to enable everyone to understand what God's plan is. This plan is something that God, who created everything, has kept hidden from long ago. [10] God hid this plan so that as he reveals it now by making it happen in those who believe, he also reveals to the spiritual authorities at the highest levels how profoundly wise he is. [11] This is the plan that God has always had, and it is what he accomplished through the work of the Messiah Jesus, our Lord. [12] So now, because of what Jesus has done, we can come to God freely and confidently because, when we trust in Jesus, he joins us to himself. [13] So please do not be discouraged by the things that I am suffering here in prison on your behalf, because they produce a glorious result for you.

[14] Because God has done all this for you, I kneel and pray to God our Father. [15] He is the original father, who gave the pattern for every family in heaven and on the earth to follow. [16] I pray that God will give you his Spirit to strengthen your spirit in proportion to how abundantly great he is. [17] I pray that the Messiah may stay as close to you as your own hearts because you trust in him, and that everything that you do and say will be a result of God's love for you and your love for him and others [18] so that you may be fully able to understand, along with all of God's people, how very much the Messiah loves us. [19] I pray that you will come to know how much the Messiah loves us, even though he loves us so much that we cannot understand it. I pray that God will give you a full measure of everything that he is.

[20] Praise God, who is able to do much more than anything that we ask him to do, or even that we think that he can do, because of how powerfully he works within us! [21] May all believers praise him for how great he is and for the awesome work that he has done through the Messiah Jesus! May they praise him throughout all generations forever! May it be so.

4 [1] Because of all this, as someone who is in prison because I serve the Lord Jesus, I appeal to you to live in a way that honors Jesus, who called you to live for him. [2] Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, enduring the bothersome things that others do because you love each other. [3] Since God's Spirit has united you, do everything that you can to remain united with one another. Bind yourselves together by acting peacefully toward each other.
[4] God only has one family of believers and one Holy Spirit, just as he also called all of you to receive the one and only thing that people can hope for, that belongs to you whom God has

called. **5** There is only one Lord, Jesus the Messiah, only one way to believe in him, and they baptized us to show that we belong to him alone. **6** There is one God, who is the Father of all of us, whether Jew or non-Jew. He rules over all of us, works through all of us, and is in all of us.

7 To each one of us God has given spiritual gifts in just the way that the Messiah has decided that we should have them. **8** That is why the scripture says,

> As he went up to the high place,
> he brought with him many people whom he had captured,
> and gave gifts to his people.

9 The words "he went up" certainly make us know that the Messiah had also previously gone down to the lower parts of the earth. **10** The Messiah, who came down to earth from heaven, is also the one who returned upward to the most exalted position in heaven in order that he might fill the universe. **11** As gifts to his people, he appointed some of them to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to seek out people to tell them the good news about Jesus, and some to care for and to teach the groups of believers. **12** God appointed all of them to prepare God's people to do the work of serving others so that all the people who belong to the Messiah might become spiritually strong. **13** This work will continue until all of us together become what God wants us to be: united as we together fully trust in the Son of God and experience his working in us, and completely mature as a group of believers—as fully mature in trusting and knowing God as the Messiah himself. **14** Then we will no longer be spiritually immature, as little children are immature. We will no longer follow every new teaching, always changing what we believe like a boat that goes one way and then the other as the wind and waves change direction. We will not allow clever people who teach what is false to deceive us with their lies. **15** Rather than that, as we lovingly speak to each other what is true, let us become more and more like the Messiah in every way as he directs us, just like a person's head directs the person's body. **16** He is the one who joins us all together and keeps us connected to each other. He teaches us how to support each other and to work in a coordinated way as he gives the ability that is appropriate to each one of us, just as a person's head does that for the parts of his body. In this way, as we love each other, we will grow together and make each other stronger.

17 For that reason, and with the authority of the Lord Jesus, I tell you this: from now on you must not live in the same way as the other non-Jews live. The way that they live comes from an empty way of thinking. **18** They are unable to think clearly about what is right or wrong because they try to live completely separated from God. They do this because they do not know what they are missing and because they stubbornly refuse to obey God. **19** They have become unable to sense if something is good or bad, and so they have devoted themselves to doing whatever shameful things their bodies desire. They commit all kinds of immoral acts and want to do them more and more.

20 But that is not how you learned to live when you learned about the Messiah, **21** to the extent that you have heard and understood the message about Jesus and have learned from him, since his way is the true way to live. **22** Your teachers taught you to stop living the way that you used to live. Because you desired to do evil things, you deceived yourselves into thinking that those things were good. Living like that was destroying you spiritually. **23** So you must let God give you a new spirit and a new way of thinking, **24** and you must start living like the new person that God created you in his own image to be. He created you to live in the right way with each other and with himself, in the true way of Jesus.

25 So stop lying to one another. Speak truthfully to each other because we belong to each other as members of God's family. **26** Be angry about sinful behavior, but do not sin because you are angry. Before the end of each day, take care of whatever has made you angry **27** so that you will not allow the devil to do evil things among you. **28** Those who have been stealing must not steal anymore. Instead, they must work hard, doing good work by their own efforts so that they may have something to give to those who are needy. **29** Do not say harmful things. Instead, say good things that will encourage people when they need help so that God can work through your words to benefit those who hear. **30** God has marked you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, who will be with you until the day that the Messiah will rescue you from this world. So do not make the Holy Spirit of God sad by how you live. **31** Do your best to completely stop behaving in these ways: Do not be resentful or furious toward others or even become angry with others. Do not shout abusively at others or slander others. Never act maliciously in any way. **32** Rather than behave like that, be kind to one another. Act mercifully toward each other. Forgive each other in the same way that God also forgave you through what the Messiah has done for you.

5 1 Because of what God has done for you, imitate him just as children imitate the father
who loves them dearly. 2 Do everything in a way that shows that you love others. Be like the
Messiah, who loved us so much that he willingly died for us on the cross as the offering and
sacrifice to God in our place. This sacrifice pleased God very much. 3 But there should be no
reason for anyone to even suggest that any of you are involved in sexual sin or any kind of
immoral or obsessive sexual behavior. Such sins do not belong among God's people. 4 When
you speak to each other, do not tell obscene stories or say foolish things or joke about
committing sins. Such things are not what people who belong to God talk about. Instead,
express the things that you are thankful for. 5 It is quite true that these people will be excluded
from the kingdom of the Messiah who is God: everyone who is sexually immoral or indecent,
or who is obsessed with sex, which is the same as worshiping an idol. 6 Do not let anyone
deceive you by telling you that God will not punish people who do these things. It is because
of these very things that God will punish the people who disobey him.

7 So do not join with those people in doing these kinds of sins. 8 Remember that before
you believed in the Lord Jesus, you did not know what was true, just as people who are in a
dark place do not know what is around them. But now it is as though you have come out into
the light, because the Lord has shown to you what is true. So live in the way that the Lord has
shown to you. 9 Because just as people who have light will walk in the right way, as a result of
knowing Jesus you can always live in a way that is good, right, and true. 10 As you live this
way, keep learning what pleases the Lord. 11 So do not participate together with those who are
doing the worthless deeds that they do in spiritual darkness. Instead, expose to everyone how
worthless those deeds are. 12 Of course it is shameful for God's people to even talk about the
evil things that those people do in secret, 13 but it is necessary for us to expose them so that
people can know and understand that these deeds are evil. This is like when we bring
something into the light in order to reveal to everyone what it truly is. Then people can
examine and judge that thing that light has exposed. 14 Before you knew God you were like
someone asleep or dead in a dark place. This is what believers are talking about when they say,

> "You who are asleep, wake up!
> You who are dead, come out of the darkness and live!
> The Messiah will show you what is true,

just as a light that shines shows people what was in the darkness."

15 So be very careful how you live. Do not behave as foolish people do. Instead, behave as wise people do. **16** Do the most good that you can with the time that you have, because people are doing more and more evil things every day. **17** So be wise, understand well what it is that the Lord Jesus wants you to do, and do it!

18 Do not become drunk by drinking alcoholic drinks, because people cannot control themselves when they are drunk. Instead, let God's Spirit control what you do at all times. **19** Sing to each other Psalms and songs about the Messiah and songs that God's Spirit gives you. Let this music come from deep within you as sincere praise to the Lord. **20** At all times thank God the Father for everything because of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah has done for you. **21** Humbly submit yourselves to each other because you deeply respect the Messiah.

22-23 Wives should submit to their own husband's leadership as they do to the Lord Jesus because the husband is the leader of the wife as also the Messiah is the leader of the worldwide assembly of believers. He is the Savior who has saved all believers from being condemned for their sins. **24** As for wives, just as all believers submit themselves to the authority of the Messiah, in the same way wives must also submit themselves completely to the authority of their husbands.

25 Each of you husbands, love your wife as much as the Messiah loved all who would believe in him. He even gave up his own life for us on the cross **26** so that he might set us apart for himself. He purified us by telling us his plan to forgive us and by removing our sins as though washing them away in water. **27** He did this so that he could present the group of all believers to himself as a glorious group that does not have any sin or moral imperfection, but instead is holy and perfect, like a glorious bride ready to meet her groom. **28** In that same way, each man should love his own wife as much as he loves his own body. A man who loves his wife is also, by doing that, loving himself **29-30** because no one ever hated his own body. Instead, he feeds his own body and cares for it, just like the Messiah also cares for all us believers in his worldwide assembly. We have become one group of believers that belongs to him. **31** The scriptures say this about people who marry:

"Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and will join himself to his wife, and the two of them will become as though they were one person."

32 There is very much about this that we cannot understand, but I am telling you that this example of a husband and wife also helps us to understand the relationship between the Messiah and the group of people who belong to him. **33** However, as for you, each man must love his wife just as he loves himself, and each woman must deeply respect her husband.

6 **1** As for you who are children, obey your parents as a way of serving the Lord Jesus because it is right for you to do that. **2** God commanded in the scriptures,

"Greatly respect your father and mother." That is the first law that God commanded in which he also promised something. He promised,

3 "If you do that, you will prosper, and you will live a long time on the earth."

4 As for you who are fathers, do not treat your children in a way that makes them become angry. Instead, bring them up well by instructing them and by disciplining them in the manner that the Lord Jesus wants you to do.

5 As for you who are slaves, very respectfully and sincerely obey those who are your masters here on the earth, just as you obey the Messiah. **6** Obey them not only when they are watching you, as people do who only care about appearing to work hard. Instead, work as though you were slaves of the Messiah, doing enthusiastically what God wants you to do. **7** Serve your masters willingly, as though you are serving the Lord Jesus rather than people. **8** Do this because you know that the Lord Jesus will reward each person for whatever good deeds that person has done. It makes no difference whether that person was a slave or a free person.

9 As for you who are masters, just like your slaves should serve you well, in the same way you must treat them well. Stop threatening them. Do not forget that the one who is both their Lord and your Lord is in heaven and he judges all people equally whether their position is high or low.

10 Finally, rely completely on the Lord Jesus to strengthen you spiritually because he is immeasurably strong. **11** Just as a soldier puts on all of his armor to be ready to fight his enemy, you should use every spiritual resource that God provides for you so that you may successfully resist the devil when he cleverly schemes against you. **12** Remember that we are not fighting against other human beings. Instead, we are fighting against the demons who have authority to rule over the people doing evil things in this evil time, that is, against the evil spirits who live in the air. **13** That is why you must use well all of the spiritual resources that God has given you, like a soldier who puts on all of his armor. If you do that, you will be able to resist the evil spirits when they attack you. You will also be ready for when they attack you again and able to continue to live well for God.

14 You must be ready to resist the devil and his evil spirits just as soldiers must always be ready to resist the enemy. To do that, keep thinking about the true things that God has shown you. Also, continue to act righteously. This will protect you like a soldier's armor protects his chest. **15** Just like a soldier who keeps his boots on, be ready to go anywhere you are needed for the sake of the good news that tells people how to be at peace with God. **16** Just as a soldier holds up a shield to stop the flaming arrows that his enemy shoots at him, you must keep trusting firmly in the Lord at all times. That will protect you from all of the things that your enemy, Satan, the evil one, will try to do to harm you spiritually. **17** Also, as a soldier relies on a helmet to protect his head, rely on the fact that God has saved you. And just as a soldier uses a sword to defeat his enemies, use the weapon that God's Spirit gives you, which is the message that comes from God. **18** Whenever you pray to God and request things from him, always let God's Spirit direct you in how you pray and what you pray for. To be most effective, keep watching to see what God is doing, and be persistent as you continue to pray for all of God's people. **19** Pray for me, also, that God would tell me what I should say whenever I speak, in order that I may boldly tell others the good news about the Messiah that people did not know before. **20** It is because I have been telling people about the Messiah that I am now representing him here in prison. Pray that as I continue to tell others about the Messiah, I may speak boldly because that is how I ought to speak.

21 Now in order that you may know about what is happening with me and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything that is happening here. He is a fellow believer whom we all love very much, and he serves the Lord Jesus faithfully. **22** That is the reason that I am

sending him to you with this letter; I want you to know how we are, and I want him to comfort and encourage you.

23 I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah may give to all of you fellow believers a peaceful spirit and enable you to love each other and to continue to trust in God.
24 I pray that God will continue to act graciously among all people who steadfastly love our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

Philippians

1 **1** I, Paul, am writing this letter to all of God's people who are joined to the Messiah Jesus in the city of Philippi. Timothy is with me. We are servants of the Messiah Jesus. We especially write this letter for the leaders of the believers and for those who assist them. **2** May God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

3 Every time I think about you, I thank my God whom I worship because of you. **4** I always pray joyfully each time I pray for all of you. **5** The reason I pray joyfully is because you have partnered with me in telling people the good news from the time you first believed it and you continue to partner with me now. **6** God started his good work within you when you first believed in him, and I am confident that he will continue that work until Jesus the Messiah returns. **7** I love you all greatly, so it is right for me to think about you in this way. God has kindly blessed us to share together in this work, both as I endure being a prisoner and also as I explain to people why the good news about Jesus is true. **8** I desire very much to be with you all, and I love you all in the same way as Jesus the Messiah loves you. God knows that this is true.

9 I pray that God will enable you to love God and others in a way that continues to increase. As you increasingly love others, I pray that God will also help you to know him better and to understand how to love others in all situations. **10** The reason I pray this is so that you will test and choose what is most pleasing to God so that then you will be completely free of doing anything wrong when the Messiah returns. **11** Instead of doing wrong things, you will be busy doing the truly good things that Jesus the Messiah enables us to do. These things will cause people to honor and praise God.

12 My fellow believers, I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have not hindered people from hearing the good news. Instead, even more people have been able to hear the good news because I am in prison. **13** In fact, all the military guards here and many other people now know that I am in prison because I proclaim the good news about the

Messiah. **14** Also, because the believers here have seen what the Lord has done through me in prison, most of them now proclaim the good news about Jesus more courageously and fearlessly than they did before.

15-17 Some people are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah because they want to obey God and because they love me and others. They understand that God has appointed me to explain to people why the good news about Jesus is true. But some are not honest about why they are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah. They do it only because they want to promote themselves. They are envious of me and want to cause trouble for me. They think that I will suffer even more in prison as they become famous for proclaiming the good news.
18 But what they want to do to me is not important! The important thing is that people are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah, either for good reasons or for bad reasons. So I am rejoicing that people are spreading the message about the Messiah! And I will continue to rejoice in that!

19 I will rejoice because I know how this situation will turn out: that God will deliver me from prison. He will do this because you are praying for me and because the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah is helping me. **20** I know that this will happen, because I very confidently expect that I will continue to faithfully honor the Messiah. I expect and desire that I will boldly honor the Messiah by my actions now and always, whether by the way I live or by the way I die.

21 As for me, I live to honor the Messiah, and if I die, it will be even better for me. **22** But if I continue to live here in my body, I will be able to productively serve the Messiah. So I do not know which I prefer, to live or to die. **23** It is difficult for me to choose which I prefer, living or dying. I long to leave this world and go to be with the Messiah, because to be with the Messiah is very much better than being here, **24** but I need to remain alive here on earth in order to continue to help you. **25** Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain alive with you all in order to help you to be even more joyful as you continue to trust in Jesus. **26** I will do this so that you will praise Jesus the Messiah even more because of me, because I will come and visit you again.

27 The important thing is that you act in a way that honors the good news about the Messiah. Do this so that people will tell me that you are working hard together in a unified way as you resist those who oppose the message about the Messiah and as you help people to live

according to the good news. You must act in this way whether or not I visit you again. 28 Do not let the people who are against you make you afraid by anything that they do or say. When they see that you are not afraid of them, they will know that God will destroy them, but he will save you. All of this is from God. 29 God does this for you because he has given you the gift of suffering for the Messiah, along with the gift of believing in him. 30 You saw how I had to resist the people who opposed me when I was there in Philippi. Now you have to resist the people who are opposing you in the same way. As people tell you even now, I am still struggling to resist such people.

2 1 Since the Messiah encourages us, since he comforts us with his love, since the Spirit has produced fellowship among you, since God gives you affection and compassion toward one another, 2 make me completely happy by doing the following things: Agree with one another, love one another, be closely united with one another, be united in your thinking. 3 Never try to selfishly make yourselves more important than others, and do not think of yourselves as better than others. Instead, be humble, and treat others as more important than yourselves. 4 Each one of you should not only be concerned about your needs. Instead, you should also be concerned about other people and their needs.

5 Think the same way as the Messiah Jesus thought:

6 Although he was in every way the same as God, he did not insist on keeping all the privileges of being equal with God.
7 Rather, he gave up divine privileges
and became a servant to others
and became a human being. When he had become a human being,
8 he humbled himself further. Specifically, he humbled himself by obeying God so far as to be willing to die. He was even willing to die by being crucified on a cross.
9 Because the Messiah humbly obeyed God, God also honored him very much;
he honored him more than any other person or being,
10 so that before Jesus,
every being will bow down and honor him,

beings who are in heaven and beings on earth and beings under the earth;
11 and every mouth will say,
that Jesus the Messiah is Lord,
so that God the Father is honored.

12 As a result of these things, my dearly loved fellow believers, as you have always obeyed God when I was with you, now that I am apart from you, you also must obey him even more. Every one of you, work with God in his saving work within you, and do this humbly reverencing God. 13 For God is doing something within you so that you will want to do—and then actually do—the good things that please him.

14 Do everything without grumbling or quarreling. 15 Behave like that in order that you may be completely faultless, children of God, who keep yourselves from evil as you live among the wicked people of this world. Then, as you live among them, you will stand out brightly against the darkness of sin. 16 Tell others the message about how to have eternal life. **Do all these things** so that at the time when the Messiah returns, I will be able to rejoice that I did not work hard among you uselessly.

17 And I am joyful and I will rejoice with you all, despite suffering daily or going through times when those who oppose the gospel try to kill me. I will gladly suffer along with you, adding to your service which you offer because you believe in him. 18 In the same way also, each of you should rejoice regarding these things; you should rejoice together with me!

19 I am hoping that the Lord Jesus will soon allow me to be able to send Timothy to visit you. I want this visit to happen because I hope he can encourage me when he returns with news of you. 20 I have no one else like Timothy who genuinely cares for you. 21 All the others whom I might send to you are concerned only about their own matters. They are not concerned enough about what Jesus the Messiah considers important. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved that he serves the Lord and others faithfully. You know that he has served the Lord closely together with me in proclaiming the good news to people. 23 I am hoping to send Timothy to you as soon as I know what will happen to me. 24 And I am confident that the Lord will allow me to be released soon, so that I myself will also come to you.

25 I have concluded that I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a fellow believer
and my fellow worker, and he endures difficulties together with me just like soldiers endure
difficulties together. He is your messenger and servant, whom you sent to help me when I was
needy. 26 Epaphroditus eagerly desires to be there with you at Philippi, and he is concerned for
you **that you would be worried about him** since you learned of his illness. 27 Indeed, he was so
sick that he almost died. But God pitied him, and he also pitied me**, and as a result, he healed
him**. God pitied me so that I would not grieve even more. 28 So I am sending him back to you
as quickly as possible. I will do this in order that you may rejoice when you see him again, and
so that I might grieve less. 29 Receive Epaphroditus joyfully as a fellow believer, and honor
other believers who are like him. 30 Do this because, as Epaphroditus was working for the
Messiah, he almost died. He knew that he might die as a result of helping me, and he nearly
did die. He helped me in order to supply the things that I needed, something you could not do
because you are far away from me.

3 1 Finally, my fellow believers, rejoice in who God is, and rejoice about what he has done
and is doing. Though I will now write to you about the same things that I mentioned to you
before, this is not tiresome for me, and it will protect you from being led astray by those who
teach things that are not true.

2 Guard yourselves against the ones who are like dirty dogs. Guard yourselves against the
ones who teach what is false. Guard yourselves against the ones who cut their bodies. 3 But as
for us—we ourselves are what it truly means to be circumcised. The Spirit of God enables us
to truly worship God, and we glory in the Messiah Jesus rather than trusting in religious acts
such as circumcision. 4 However, if anyone thinks they could trust in religious acts, I could;
and I even more than others. **I will tell you why.**

5 I was circumcised eight days after I was born. I am from the people of Israel and am a
descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew who has retained the Hebrew language and
way of living. As regards obeying the laws of Moses, I was a Pharisee, and therefore I strictly
obeyed all the laws of Moses and teachings of the scribes. 6 With regard to being passionate
about what I believed, I was so extremely passionate about what I believed that I caused those
who followed Jesus to suffer. With regard to doing what God required in the law of Moses and
doing what the scribes required concerning it, I was without fault.

7 But all the things that I formerly trusted in, these same things I now consider to be worthless because of the Messiah. **8** Instead, even more, I now regard all things as worthless compared to how great it is to know the Messiah, Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have willingly given up all things and I think of them as feces to throw away in order that I might have the Messiah. **9** I have willingly given up the things I formerly trusted in so that I might be fully united with the Messiah by believing in him, and not by obeying the laws that God gave to Moses. **I do this because I know** that the only way to please God is by believing in the Messiah. **10** I want to know the Messiah better and better. I want to continually experience him working powerfully in my life, just like God worked powerfully when he caused the Messiah to become alive after he had died. I also want to be continually willing to suffer in order that I may obey God, just like the Messiah suffered in order that he might obey God. I want to become like him in his death. **11** **I want all of this because** I somehow want God to cause me to live again after I have died.

12 I do not claim that I have already attained this. Nor do I say that God has already finished working in me to make me like Jesus. But I earnestly try to become more and more like Jesus, because this is why Jesus the Messiah took hold of me. **13** My fellow believers, I certainly do not think that I have already become completely like Jesus. Nor have fully known him. Rather, I have determined to forget about the things that are in the past and to work hard for the things that are in front of me. **14** Instead, I concentrate only on continuing to become more and more like Jesus until I die. As a result, because of my relationship with Jesus the Messiah, God will reward me in heaven. **15** So then, all of us who are mature believers should think this same way. But if you think differently about anything I have just written, God also will show this to you. **16** However, regarding the true things that God has already revealed to us, let us all conduct our lives according to these things.

17 My fellow believers, join together in imitating me, and observe closely those people who live as we do. **18** There are many people who act in a way that shows that they oppose the message about the Messiah dying on the cross. I have told you about these people many times before, and now I am sad, even crying, as I tell you about them again. **19** God will severely punish these people. These people serve their physical desires rather than God, and they are proud of the very things of which they should be ashamed. These people only think about earthly things instead of heavenly things. **20** As for us, we are citizens of heaven, and it is from

heaven that we eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return and rescue us. **21** God will change the weak and humble bodies that we have now to be bodies like the glorious resurrected body of Jesus. He will do this by his power, by which he is able to control all things.

4 **1** My fellow believers, I love you, and I greatly desire to see you. I rejoice because of you; you are the reason God will reward me. In the way that I have just described to you **in this letter**, continue to be steadfastly committed to the Lord, my fellow believers whom I love.

2 I urge you, Euodia, and I urge you, Syntyche, to again have a peaceful relationship with each other, because you are both joined to the Lord. **3** And I also urge you, my faithful partner, to please help these women. **Please help them because** they have helped me spread the good news, as have Clement and the rest of my fellow laborers, whose names God has written in his book of those who will live with him forever.

4 Always rejoice in who God is and what he has done and is doing! I say again, rejoice! **5** Act in such a way that all people see that you are gentle. **Do this because** the Lord will return soon. **6** Do not worry about anything. Instead, in every situation pray to God, and tell him exactly what you need, and ask him to help you. And thank God for all he does for you. **7** As a result God will enable you not to worry about anything, and he will protect how you think and feel, as you are joined to the Messiah Jesus.

8 Finally, my fellow believers, think about whatever is true, whatever is worth honoring, whatever is right, whatever is faultless, whatever is pleasing, whatever is worth admiring, whatever is good, whatever is worth praising: These are the things that you should always be thinking about. **9** Continually do the things that I have taught you and the things you have heard me say and the things you have seen me do. If you do these things, the God who causes us to be at peace will be with you.

10 I rejoice greatly and thank the Lord, because now, after some time, **by sending money to me** you have once again shown that you are concerned about me. Indeed, you were concerned about me all the time, but you had no opportunity to show it. **11** Do not think that I am saying this because I am concerned about lacking something I need. Rather, I have learned how to be

happy no matter what situation I am in. **12** I have learned how to be happy when I do not have what I need and how to be happy when I have more than I need. I have learned how to be happy when I am hungry and when I have plenty of food to eat. I have learned how to be happy in all circumstances and at all times. **13** Because the Messiah strengthens me, I am able to respond well to every situation. **14** Nevertheless, you did the right thing to help me in my difficult situation.

15 You yourselves, my friends there at Philippi, know that during the time I first proclaimed the good news to you, when I left there to go out from the province of Macedonia, no assembly of believers except you sent me funds or helped me in any way! **16** Even when I was in the city of Thessalonica, more than once you sent me money to supply what I needed. **17** I do not say this because I desire that you give me money. Instead, I desire that God will abundantly reward you **as a result of your helping me**.

18 You have given me a very generous gift, and, as a result, I have all I require and more. I have an abundant supply of what I need, because you sent Epaphroditus to me with your gift. God considers that your gift is very acceptable, and he is very pleased with it. **19** God, whom I serve, will supply everything you need, because you belong to Jesus the Messiah and because he owns all things. **20** Now, may our God and Father be praised and honored forever! Amen!

21 Greet for me all God's people there. They all belong to Jesus the Messiah. The believers with me greet you also. **22** All of God's people here send their greetings to you. The fellow believers who work in the palace of Caesar, the emperor, especially send their greetings to you.

23 I desire and pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly toward you all. Amen.

Colossians

1 **1** I, Paul, write this letter to you, and Timothy our fellow believer is with me. God sent me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God chose to do. **2** I send this letter to you who are God's people and faithful fellow believers united to the Messiah, who live in the city of Colossae. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

3 We pray for you very often. When we do, we thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, **4** because have learned that you trust in the Messiah Jesus and that you love all God's people. **5** You do these things because you are confidently waiting for everything that God is keeping for you in heaven. You first learned about all that God has for you when you heard the true message, which is the good news about the Messiah. **6** Just as you heard and believed this good news in Colossae, increasing numbers of people in many places are also hearing and believing it. These people are living in a different way now, just as you have been living in a different way since you first learned about it and truly experienced how God acts kindly toward us. **7** This is what Epaphras told you would happen. He works with us for the Messiah, and we love him. He faithfully serves the Messiah as our representative. **8** He told us that you love all God's people, just as God's Spirit has empowered you to do.

9 Because of everything that Epaphras told us, since the time when he first told us about you, we have joined him in consistently praying for you. When we pray for you, we ask God to show you everything that he wants you to do and to make you able to understand everything that God's Spirit is teaching you. **10** We have been praying that you know what God wants so that you can live in a way that honors the Lord and pleases him in every way. When you live this way, you will be doing every sort of good thing and continually knowing God better. **11** As you live this way, God will greatly strengthen you to be able to patiently endure in all situations, and to do so joyfully. God can strengthen you greatly because he is gloriously powerful. **12** Then you will continually thank God our Father, because he has made you worthy to take part in everything that he has to give to his people when they are with him.

13 God our Father has delivered us from the evil one, who used to control us, and he has given us to his Son, whom he loves, so that now we can obey his Son. 14 Because we are united to his Son, God has set us free; that is, he has forgiven our sins. 15 God's Son perfectly reveals who God is, even though no one can see God. The Son existed before God created anything, and he has first place over everything that God has created. 16 You can know that the Son existed before anything else existed and has first place over everything because the Father and the Son together created everything that exists. This includes everything in heaven and everything on earth, and everything that we can see and everything that we cannot see, including the spiritual beings such as thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities. The Father and the Son together created everything, and everything exists to honor the Son. 17 The Son existed before any of creation existed, and he sustains and connects all of it. 18 In regard to the church, that is, all believers, he rules over it as people's heads rule over their bodies. He made it possible for the church to begin when he was the first person to live again after dying, never to die again. Because of these things about him, he is greater and more important than anything and anybody else. 19 The Son rules over everything because the Son is fully God, just as the Father gladly willed him to be. 20 God the Father also gladly chose to work through the Son to reconcile to himself everything and every person that he created in the whole universe. God did this through his Son when his Son died on the cross, which made everything peaceful between God and his creation.

21 Before you believed in the Messiah, you did not want to be close to God, and you were hostile to him because everything you thought and did was evil. 22 But that has all changed now that you believe in Jesus! God the Father has repaired the relationship between himself and you by working through his Son when his Son became human and died. God the Father repaired the relationship so that you can dwell with him as people who are completely free from sin. 23 This is all true about you as long as you continue confidently to believe in the Messiah, and as long as you do not give up confidently hoping for God to do what he has promised in the good news that you heard and that people all over the world have heard. I, Paul, serve God by proclaiming to people this same good news.

24 At the present time I suffer cheerfully because it is for your benefit. I am suffering physically to complete my part of the suffering that the Messiah began on behalf of his people, the church, which is like the Messiah's own body. 25 God called me to serve his church, and

he appointed me specifically to carry out his plan that concerns you. My part of this plan is to proclaim to you non-Jews the full message from God. 26 God kept this message a secret, concealing it from people for a long time. But now he has made the message known to his people. 27 God has been wanting to tell his people this very glorious message that was secret, which applies to non-Jews as well as to Jews. The secret is that the Messiah is united to you non-Jews, which means that you can confidently expect to become glorious beings like the Messiah. 28 This is the Messiah whom we announce to everyone. When we talk about him, we warn and teach each person as wisely as we can. We do these things so that each of these people may become spiritually mature in each person's union with the Messiah. 29 I work hard in all that I do in order to accomplish that goal. I can do this because the Messiah is powerfully enabling me to do it.

2 1 I write these things because I want to inform you about how hard I am working. I work hard for you, for the fellow-believers who live in the city of Laodicea, and for all fellow-believers who have not met me in person. 2 I work this hard in order to encourage all of you who have not met me so that you unite yourselves together with love for each other. I want you to completely and confidently understand the secret that God had previously kept hidden. This secret is about the Messiah. 3 The Messiah is the one who knows all of God's wonderful, wise plan. 4 I am telling you about this secret in order that no person who argues persuasively will be able to convince you to believe what is not true. 5 You can know that those who argue persuasively are wrong because I care about you and think about you, even though I am not with you in person. I am very happy to see that you are behaving properly and that you firmly believe in the Messiah.

6 Now that I have told you the truth about the good news, I want you to behave in a way that fits with how God has united you to the Messiah. You should keep behaving as you did when you accepted the Messiah Jesus the Lord. 7 Behaving in this way includes staying firmly united to him, just as a plant's roots hold it firmly in place. It also includes depending completely on him, just as a house stands on its foundation. It also includes confidently trusting the Messiah, just as Epaphras taught you, and giving thanks more and more.

8 Be on the alert so that no one who tries to lead you away from the truth will succeed. Anyone who tries to lead you away will use human thinking that is meaningless and deceptive.

Such a false message comes from what older generations teach younger generations and from what humans normally think about the world, not from the Messiah. 9 I mention the Messiah because he, a human, is fully God. 10 In addition, you have everything you need since God has united you to the Messiah, who rules over the spiritual beings, including every ruler and every authority. 11 When God united you to the Messiah, it was as if God the Father had circumcised you. I do not mean that a human physically cut flesh off you. Rather, instead of cutting off flesh, God removed your weak and sinful parts. God circumcised you in this way through what the Messiah accomplished. 12 Here is another way to understand what God has done for you: when they baptized you, it was as if you died and people buried you because God the Father included you when the Messiah died and people buried him. And it was as if God the Father brought you back to life because he included you when he brought the Messiah back to life. This happened because you believed that God the Father works powerfully, particularly when he brought the Messiah back to life. 13 You used to be spiritually dead, because you often sinned against God and because you were non-Jews and not part of God's people. But God the Father brought you back to life spiritually because he included you when he brought the Messiah back to life. This means that he has forgiven us for all the wrong things we have done against him. 14 It was as if God had an official list of the debts we owe, which are our sins. When he forgave us, he wiped out that list of sins that counted against us, and he prevented it from coming between us and him. God accomplished this when the Messiah died on the cross, as surely as if he had nailed the list to the cross. 15 Moreover, God defeated the spiritual beings that rule the world, and he publicly showed that he defeated them, just as if he had paraded them around as prisoners. God did this when the Messiah died on the cross.

16 Because of these things that God has done for you, do not worry about what other people say you should do. They may have opinions about what to eat and what to drink. They may have opinions about what special days to observe, including days for worshipping God, days for celebrating when there is a new moon, or days for resting. 17 God used these things to point to what he had planned for the future, which is the coming of the Messiah himself. 18 You will meet some people who enjoy pretending to be humble and worshipping angels and who love to talk about amazing things that they have seen. They act like they are great—although without good reason, because they think only in human ways. Do not listen to these people who are trying to take away what God has ready to give to you. 19 These people are not remaining loyal to the Messiah. It is he who leads the church, just like people's heads lead their bodies. The

head directs how the whole body, each and every part, receives what it needs and how it works together. In this way the body grows. Just like that, the Messiah directs the church so that it grows as God wants it to grow.

20 It is as if you have died, **because God included you** when the Messiah died. **This frees you** from the spiritual beings that rule this world. So, you should not obey the rules **that these people have given to you**. **Doing so would mean that** you were really still part of this world.
21 **These rules include commands like these:** "Do not feel **certain things**!" "Do not try **certain foods**!" "Do not take hold of **certain things**!" **22** All such rules concern things that perish when people make use of them. Further, people**, not God,** teach and require **these rules**. **23** Following these rules may seem to be a wise thing to do for people who worship God the way they want to, who pretend to be humble, and who treat their bodies badly **as part of their religion**. However, **following these rules** will not help you stop sinning.

3 **1** To return **to what I said before**, it is as if God brought you back to life **because he included you** when he brought the Messiah back to life. **Because of this,** I want you to stay focused on what is in heaven, since the Messiah is there. He sits next to God the Father on the throne **and rules everything**. **2** I want you to desire what **God has ready for you** in heaven, not what **you could have here** on earth. **3** **You should think this way** because it is as if you have died. You are spiritually alive only because God has united you to the Messiah in close relationship with himself, and this cannot be seen **on earth right now**. **4** You are alive because God has united you to the Messiah. **Therefore,** when **he returns again to earth and** everyone sees him, at that time you will be with him. Then, everyone will see that you too have become glorious **beings like him**.

5 Because **this is your destiny**, think of the desires you have to do evil things in this world as enemies that you must kill. **The evil things that you might desire include** having improper sex, doing impure things, enjoying wrong emotions, desiring evil things, and wanting more than you need, which is the same as worshiping another god. **6** Because people have these desires, God is angry with them and will punish them. **7** You, just like them, used to have these desires to do evil things. **That was** when you acted out these desires. **8** But now **that you have believed**, you must stop behaving in all evil ways. **These evil ways include** acting in angry ways, being angry with others, desiring to hurt others, talking bad about others, and speaking shameful

words. [9] You must not tell lies to one another. You are not the person you used to be, a person who normally behaved in these evil ways. [10] You are a new person now, a person in whom God is working to make you know him more. You are now a person who is like God, who turned you into this new person. [11] Since you are all new people, it is not important whether anyone is a non-Jew or a Jew, or whether anyone is circumcised or not, or whether anyone is a foreigner or an uncivilized person, or whether anyone is a slave or not. Instead, it is the Messiah who is most important, and God has united him to all of you.

[12] God has chosen you, he has set you apart as his own people, and he loves you. Because of these things and because you are new people, you must always behave properly towards others. This includes caring about them, being kind to them, not being proud, not behaving harshly, and taking a long time to become angry. [13] You must not easily become irritated with one another. When you blame other people for the things they have done, you must forgive them. You should imitate how the Lord forgave you by forgiving one another. [14] Finally, what is more important than everything I have said so far is that you love one another. By doing this you will unite yourselves together, just as God has called you to do.

[15] You must make the peace which the Messiah has given you a primary factor when you choose what to do. You must do this because God has chosen you to have peace as he unites you closely together, as closely as if you were one person's body. Also, you must give thanks to God. [16] You must focus completely on the message about the Messiah as you think and act. You must teach and instruct one another very wisely using songs from the Scriptures, songs about Jesus, and songs that the Holy Spirit has given to you. You must thankfully and sincerely sing to God.

[17] Whenever you say or do anything, you should behave in every situation as people who represent the Lord Jesus. Also, you should thank God, who is our Father. You can do this only because of the work of the Messiah.

[18] Wives must treat their husbands as the leaders in their families, since this is appropriate behavior for those whom God has united to the Lord. [19] Husbands must love their wives and not treat them harshly.

20 Children must obey their parents in every circumstance. This pleases God and is appropriate for those whom God has united to the Lord. 21 Fathers must not make their children angry. Otherwise, the children may feel like giving up.

22 Slaves must obey those who are their masters in this world in every circumstance. They should obey not just when their masters are watching, which is how those who want to please only humans behave. Instead, they should obey their masters sincerely because they treat the Lord with reverence. 23 You must do whatever work you have to do diligently, as if you were working for the Lord instead of for merely human masters. 24 You must obey and serve in this way because you know that the Lord will justly repay you by giving you what he has kept for you. Remember that the Lord Messiah is the real master for whom you are working. 25 You must remember who the real master is because God will punish anyone who does wrong in proportion to those wrong actions. This is because God does not judge people based on how they look or who they are but on what they have done.

4 1 Masters must treat their slaves justly and fairly. You who are masters must do this because you know that you too serve a Master, one who is in heaven.

2 Pray to God persistently. Pay attention when you pray, and give thanks to God. 3 When you are praying, pray for us too. Pray that God will make it possible for us to freely proclaim our message, which is the secret about the Messiah that we now share with others. Because we proclaimed this message, I am now in prison. 4 Pray that I am able to explain the good news clearly, since this is what God has called me to do.

5 Behave wisely around those who do not believe in the Messiah. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to do this. 6 When you talk with them, you must always speak in a pleasant and interesting way. When you do this, you will know the best way to respond to each person.

7 Tychicus will tell you everything that has been happening to me. He is a fellow believer whom I love, who helps me faithfully, and who serves together with me as a man whom God has united to the Lord. 8 I am sending Tychicus to you with this letter because I want you to know how we are doing and because Tychicus will help you live confidently. 9 I am sending

him to you with Onesimus, who is a faithful fellow believer whom I love. He is from your group. Tychicus and Onesimus will tell you about everything that has been happening here.

10 Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, and Mark, who is Barnabas' cousin, send their regards to you. You already know that you should welcome Mark if he visits you. 11 Jesus, whom you may know by the name Justus, also sends his regards. These men—Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus—are the only Jewish believers who are working with me for the sake of God's kingdom. They have encouraged me in this work. 12 Epaphras, who is from your group and who serves the Messiah Jesus, sends his regards to you. He prays earnestly for you very often. He prays that God will make you able to be what God has called you to be and to be sure of everything that God wants you to do. 13 You know that he prays this way for you because I can personally affirm this about him. I tell you that he works very hard for you, for the people who live in the city of Laodicea, and for the people who live in the city of Hierapolis. 14 Luke the doctor, whom I love, and Demas send their regards to you.

15 Give our regards to the fellow believers who live in Laodicea, to Nympha, and to the group of believers that meets in Nympha's home. 16 After the person who reads this letter to you finishes it, send it to Laodicea so that someone can read it to the group of believers there, too. Also, ask for the letter I sent to the believers in Laodicea so that you too can read it.
17 You must tell Archippus to make sure that he completes the task that God gave him to do when God united him to the Messiah.

18 I, Paul, send my regards to you. I am writing these last words myself instead of having my scribe write them. You must not forget that I am in prison. I pray that God will be gracious to you.

1 Thessalonians

1 **1** I, Paul, write this letter to you, and Silas and Timothy are with me. I send this letter to you, the group of believers in the city of Thessalonica. God the Father has united you to himself and to the Lord Jesus the Messiah. May God continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

2 We pray for you persistently. When we do, we consistently thank God for all of you. **3** We thank our God and Father for what you do because you trust in him. We thank him for the way that you help people because you love them. We thank him for the way that you patiently endure because you confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah to come again. **4** We thank God because we know that he chose you, fellow believers whom God loves. **5** We know that God chose you, because when we told you the good news, we did not just say words. Rather, the Holy Spirit also powerfully worked through us, and we were sure that the good news was true. In the same way, you remember how we acted to help you when we were with you. **6** As for you, you acted as we do and as the Lord Jesus did. Specifically, when you believed the good news, you suffered greatly, but the Holy Spirit caused you to rejoice. **7** Because you acted in those ways, all the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia want to act as you do. **8** In fact, many people who live in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia have heard the message about the Lord Jesus because of you. Even more, people in very many places have heard about how you trust in God. As a result, we do not need to tell people anything about what God has done for you. **9** Indeed, those same people tell others about how well it went when we visited you. They say that you stopped caring about other gods and began to focus on God so that you could worship and obey him, the only real God. **10** Further, they say that you focused on God so that you could eagerly anticipate when God's Son will come back from where he is in heaven. God made Jesus alive again, and Jesus is the one who will save us who believe in him at the time when God will punish people for their sins.

2 **1** Fellow believers, you surely remember that when we visited you, it was very productive. **2** As you remember, when we were in the city of Philippi, people hurt us and abused us. However, our God made us confident when we told you the good news from God, despite how hard it was to do. **3** When we encouraged you to believe the good news, we did not convince you to believe an incorrect message. We did not say or do unclean things. We did not deceive you. **4** Rather, we speak as people whom God has tested and approved to proclaim the good news. We are not trying to please people. Instead, we are trying to please God. He is the one who tests what we think and desire. **5** In fact, when we visited you, we did not flatter you or pretend not to want money. You remember that this is true, and God testifies that it is true. **6** We did not desire that people would honor us. We did not desire this from you or from anyone else. **7** Since the Messiah sent us to represent him, we could have required you to obey us and give us whatever we wanted. However, when we were with you, we acted as gentle as babies. We were like mothers who lovingly take care of their children. **8** Since we care for you in those ways, we delighted to share the good news from God with you. Even more, we delighted to share our own lives with you. That is because we started to love you very much. **9** Fellow believers, I know that you recall how hard we labored. We worked all day long so that we would not have to bother any of you by asking for money. That was how we acted when we told you the good news from God. **10** Both you and God can testify that we did what was good and right when we were with you who trust in God. **11** You remember that we behaved toward every one of you as a father behaves toward his own children. **12** That means that we were teaching you and urging you so that you would live the way that God wants his people to live. He is the one who invites you to participate in his kingdom and in how great he is.

13 Further, we consistently thank God that you accepted what you heard about God in our message. You did not consider it to be a merely human message. Rather, you considered it to be a message from God, which is what it really is. This message is changing you who trust in God. **14-15** Now unbelieving Jews not only killed the prophets long ago, but they also recently killed the Lord Jesus and forced us to leave your city. These unbelieving Jews also persecuted the believers who live in the region of Judea. In fact, fellow believers, you have become like these groups of believers in Judea whom God has united to Jesus the Messiah. That is because people from your own country persecute you, just as the unbelieving Jews persecuted the believers in Judea. These unbelieving Jews do not please God, and they act against most people.

16 They try to stop us from telling the good news to non-Jews, which we do so that God saves non-Jews. So, these unbelieving Jews consistently continue to sin. However, God will completely punish them!

17 In contrast, fellow believers, we very eagerly desired to be with you in person, even though we had to leave you for a little while. Although we were physically absent, we always thought and cared about you. 18 Indeed, we wanted to visit you. Specifically, I myself, Paul, tried to visit several times. However, each time, Satan stopped us from visiting. 19 We wanted to visit you because it is you who enable us to hope and to rejoice and to say great things about you, who honor us. We know that this will be true when our Lord Jesus examines everyone after he returns to this world. 20 Indeed, you honor us and make us rejoice!

3 1 So then, because we felt like we could not possibly wait any longer, we decided that just Silas and I should stay behind in the city of Athens. 2 Then, Silas and I had Timothy visit you. He is our fellow believer and serves God by proclaiming the good news about the Messiah. We had him visit you so that he could support and encourage you as you trust in God. 3 That way, when people hurt you, you do not become unsure as you trust in God. In fact, you are well aware that God already decided that people would hurt us believers. 4 You are well aware of that because, while we apostles were visiting you, we warned you ahead of time that others were about to hurt us believers. You are well aware that this is exactly what occurred. 5 Because others have hurt us believers, and because I felt like I could not possibly wait any longer, I had Timothy visit you. I wanted to learn if you were still trusting in God. I was concerned that the devil might have succeeded in tempting you to stop trusting in God. If that were true, how hard we had worked among you would have accomplished nothing!

6 However, Timothy recently returned to Silas and me after visiting you. He gave us good news about how much you trust God and love each other. He told us that whenever you think about us, it makes you happy. He also told us that you desire to be with us, just as we desire to be with you. 7 Fellow believers, because of what Timothy told us, although people were persecuting and hurting us often, God used how you continue to trust in him to encourage us that you are doing well. 8 Indeed, since you continue to trust in the Lord Jesus, we feel much better now! 9 In fact, we cannot thank God enough for you! We are extremely happy about

you whenever we pray to our God. 10 All day long we urgently ask God to allow us to visit you
and help you increase how much you trust in God.

11 We pray that God our Father and our Lord Jesus will enable us to visit you again! 12 We
pray that the Lord Jesus will cause you always to love each other and all people more and
more. That is how we love you! 13 We pray those things so that God will make you spiritually
strong. That way, God our Father will consider you to be faultlessly pure. He will do that when
our Lord Jesus returns to this world, bringing with him everyone who belongs to him. May it
be so!

4 1 So then, fellow believers, here is the rest of what I want to write to you. When we visited
you, we taught you how you should behave in a way that honors God, and that is how you are
behaving! Now we urge you, because God has united you to the Lord Jesus, to continue to
behave in this way more and more. 2 You remember what we commanded you to do as we
spoke for the Lord Jesus.

3 For example, God desires that you act in pure ways. That means that you should not have
improper sex. 4 That also means that you all should learn to control how you desire to have
sex. That way, you will be acting purely and honoring God. 5 You should not have any
improper sex that you greatly desire. That is what non-Jews who do not trust in God do. 6 You
should do what God desires concerning having sex so that you will not sin by mistreating a
fellow believer. You should avoid sinning in that way because the Lord Jesus will punish all
people who have any kind of improper sex. We already declared that to you when we were with
you. 7 Indeed, God chose us so that we would belong to him. He did not choose us so that we
would do impure things. 8 So then, anyone who disobeys what we have commanded you is not
simply disobeying a human. Rather, that person is disobeying God. He is the one who sends the
Holy Spirit to you.

9 We do not have to tell you anything about how to care for fellow believers. That is
because God instructed you so that you care for each other. 10 That is also because you already
care for all the fellow believers throughout Macedonia province. Fellow believers, we exhort
you to care for fellow believers even more. 11 We also exhort you to try very earnestly to live
peacefully, to focus on your own tasks, and to earn what you need to live. In fact, that is what

we told you to do when we were with you. 12 We urge you to do these things, so that you can set a good example toward those who do not believe in the Messiah by how modestly you live. Then you would not have to depend on others to provide what you need to live.

13 Also, our fellow believers in the Messiah, we want you to be aware about what will happen to believers in the Messiah who are dead. You should not be like the rest of humanity, which does not believe in the Messiah. They are deeply sad because they do not confidently expect that people will resurrect after death. 14 Certainly, we apostles are convinced that Jesus died and resurrected. This is why we also are convinced that God will resurrect the dead people who are united to Jesus. Then God will send them back with Jesus when he returns to earth again. 15 In fact, what we apostles are now telling you is a message from the Lord Jesus himself. When the Lord Jesus comes again, all believers in the Messiah will greet him. First, those believers in the Messiah who have already died will certainly greet him, and then we believers in the Messiah who are still alive. 16 This is how the Lord Jesus will come down from heaven: the Lord Jesus himself will personally give the command for all to resurrect. The chief angel will shout. God's trumpet will blast. Then all the dead who are united to the Messiah will be the first to resurrect from the earth. 17 After that, God will snatch up all of us believers in the Messiah who are still alive on earth so that we can meet the Lord Jesus in the air. Both groups of believers in the Messiah will meet together on the clouds. This is how we will remain together with the Lord Jesus forever! 18 As a result, you must encourage each other with this message!

5 1 Now I want you to be aware of the timing of our Lord's return to earth Our fellow believers in the Messiah, we do not really need to write anything to you about the specific time of our Lord's return. 2 This is because you yourselves already know accurately about the time when the Lord Jesus will come back. You also know that he will come unexpectedly, like when a robber comes at night. 3 The Lord Jesus will come at a time when people are saying, "We are safe and secure!" Then, suddenly, God will overwhelm and destroy them! It will be similar to when a pregnant woman cannot escape being overwhelmed by labor pains. In the same way, those people can never escape when God destroys! 4 However, our fellow believers in the Messiah, you are not people who are unaware of what will happen, like when people are in the darkness. This is why, when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to punish the people who do not

belong to him, he will not surprise you as if he were a thief. **5** Since you are all God's children, you should live ready for Jesus to return to earth, like people who are in the light or awake during day are aware of what is happening. We are not Satan's children, who live unaware of what will happen, like people at night or in the darkness who cannot perceive as well. **6** So, this is why, as God's children, we must live ready for what will happen. We must not live unaware of what will happen like the rest of humanity, who are just like people who are sleeping. Instead, we must stay alert and remain attentive, expecting Jesus to return to earth. **7** It is well known that when people are unaware of what will happen, it is usually at night, when they are sleeping. And when people get drunk, they are not ready for what will happen. They usually get drunk at night, when they cannot perceive things as well. **8** But we who are ready for the Lord Jesus to return to earth do not live unaware of what will happen like these people. Since we are ready, we must remain attentive. We must fully arm ourselves like soldiers. Faithful love towards God should cover our chests like a breastplate. Being confident that God will save us should fully protect our heads like a helmet.

9 Since we are his people, God did not destine that he would punish us for our sins. Instead, he destined that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, would preserve and save us. **10** Jesus died in our place so that we would live forever with him. This is true, whether we are alive or dead when he returns to earth. **11** Since this is true, continue to habitually encourage and support each and every one of your fellow believers in the Messiah!

12 Finally, our fellow believers in the Messiah, we request that you give recognition to your spiritual leaders who work hard among you, in the same way you would give recognition to the Lord Jesus. You should also give them recognition because they continually warn and instruct you about living like believers in the Messiah should. **13** Because of how hard they work for you, we also request that you abundantly love your spiritual leaders by being considerate of them. We also urge that you keep living peacefully with each other.

14 Our fellow believers in the Messiah, we now urge that you warn and instruct those who live inappropriately. We also urge that you cheer up those who are discouraged. We also urge that you support those who are weak. We also urge that you live patiently with every one of your fellow believers in the Messiah. **15** If someone treats you badly, make sure that you do not treat them badly in return. Instead, whenever you can, actively look for ways to kindly treat every fellow believer in the Messiah.

16 Be joyful all the time! **17** Constantly pray! **18** Keep giving thanks to God in every situation! Indeed, God desires for all of you who are united to Jesus the Messiah to do all these things.

19 Do not **try to stop** the **Holy** Spirit **from working among you. That would be like someone trying to** extinguish **a fire**! **20** **In other words,** do not scorn prophecies **that the Holy Spirit gives to other believers in the Messiah**! **21** **Instead,** keep evaluating all **of the prophecies and** retain **only** those that prove to be excellent. **22** Refrain from any thing that appears to be wicked!

23 In summary, we pray that God will personally make you live like people who completely belong to him. God is the one who gives his people peace. We also pray that God will preserve you completely innocent for the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah arrives on earth again. **24** The faithful God **continually** summons all of you **to live like those who completely belong to him. So, you can be certain that** he will also do **whatever is necessary for you to be able to live like those who completely belong to him**.

25 **Our** fellow believers in the Messiah, we also ask that you keep praying for me, for Silas, and for Timothy! **26** When you meet together **for worship**, affectionately greet each of your fellow believers in the Messiah in a way that is appropriate for those who belong to God. **27** I want you to swear an oath to the Lord **Jesus**, that you will read this letter to all the believers in the Messiah **among you**! **28** May our Lord Jesus the Messiah **continue to** act kindly toward all of you!

2 Thessalonians

1 **1** I, Paul, am writing this letter. Silas and Timothy are with me. We are sending this letter to you, the group of believers in the city of Thessalonica, who belong to God our Father and to our Lord Jesus the Messiah. **2** May God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful.

3 Our fellow believers, we should thank God very frequently for you, and we certainly do! It is very appropriate that we should do this, because you are trusting in the Lord Jesus more and more, and because every one of you is loving each of the others more and more. **4** As a result, we keep proudly talking about you to the other groups of believers belonging to God. We tell them how you patiently endure suffering and how you continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, even though other people continually cause you to suffer.

5 We can clearly see that God has made you able to stay faithful to Jesus while people make you suffer. From that we know that God judges justly, because it means that he considers you to be worthy of being part of his people forever. That is what you are suffering for. **6** Since God judges justly, he will certainly also cause suffering for those people who are making you suffer. **7** He will also cause the people who are afflicting you to stop doing it. He will also do that for us. This will happen when our Lord Jesus shows himself to everyone as he returns from heaven with his powerful angels. **8** Then with blazing fire he will punish those people who have rejected God, those who refuse to accept the good news about our Lord Jesus. **9** These people will experience the direct result of rejecting God. They will be apart from the Lord Jesus forever, where they will never know how wonderfully powerful he is, and where they will be always dying. **10** This will happen when the Lord Jesus comes back from heaven at the time that God has decided. As a result, all we who are his people will praise him and marvel at him. You will be there, too, because you believed us when we told you the things about Jesus that we knew to be true.

11 We frequently ask God to strengthen you spiritually so that you might praise Jesus like this. We pray that the God whom we worship will make you worthy to be the new people that

he has invited you to be. We pray that he will empower you to accomplish every good thing that you want to do because God has inspired you to do it. **12** We pray this because we want you to praise our Lord Jesus, and we want him to honor you. This will happen because the God whom we worship and our Lord Jesus the Messiah are exceedingly kind to you.

2 **1** Now **I want to write to you** about the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah will return and will gather us to himself. My fellow believers, I urge you **2** to think calmly about any message that may have come to you that says that the Lord Jesus has already returned to earth. Do not let this kind of message upset you. It does not matter if the message comes from a spirit or if it comes from a person or if it is in a letter that someone claims that I wrote. **3** Do not allow anyone to persuade you to believe any such message.

It is not true, because other things **that have not yet happened** must happen before **the Lord returns**. Before the Lord returns, a large number of people will rebel against God. They will accept and obey a certain man who will oppose everything that God has said. (After some time, God will destroy him.) **4** This man will say that he is greater than everything that people consider to be God and everything that people worship. He will oppose both. As a result, he will even sit **in God's place** in God's temple to proclaim that he himself is God! **5** I am sure that you remember that I told you all about these things while I was still with you **there in Thessalonica**.

6 You also know what is preventing this man from showing himself to everybody now. He will not be able to show himself until the time that God has set for him. **7** Clearly, people are already opposing what God has said, for reasons that only believers can understand. But someone is preventing this man **from revealing himself** now, and he will continue to prevent this man until God tells him to stop preventing this man. **8** It is then that God will allow this man who completely rejects God's instructions to show himself to everyone. (In the end, Jesus will return. When this man sees Jesus, this man will become completely powerless. Then the Lord Jesus will speak a command that will destroy this man.)

9 **But before Jesus destroys this man,** Satan will work very powerfully through this man. Satan will empower this man to do all kinds of supernatural deeds that look like the miracles that God does. **10** This man will be very wicked and will deceive very many people. These

people will perish because they did not accept the true message about Jesus as highly valuable, so God will not save them. **11** Because these people reject the true message about Jesus, God enables them to think falsely so that they will believe this man's lies. **12** God does that so that he may justly condemn all those who refused to believe the true message about Jesus, people who instead preferred to do things that are wicked.

13 But we should always thank God for you, our fellow believers, you whom our Lord Jesus loves. We should do this because God chose you to be among the first people to believe the true message about Jesus. God chose you to be among the first people that he would save and set apart for himself by means of his Spirit. **14** God invited you to belong to him as we proclaimed to you the good news about Jesus so that God might honor you in some of the same ways that he honors our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

15 So, our fellow believers, continue to strongly believe in the Messiah. Continue believing the true teachings that we have passed on to you when we spoke to you and wrote a letter to you.

16-17 God our Father loves us. Because he is extremely kind to us, he will continue to encourage us forever, and we can expect to receive good things from him. We pray that he and our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself will encourage you and make you able to continually do and say every kind of good thing.

3 **1** This is the last part of what I want to say. Our fellow believers, pray for us that many more people will soon hear the message about our Lord Jesus and honor it, just as you have done. **2** Pray also for us that God will keep the many evil people from harming us. As you know, most people are not faithful to the Lord.

3 Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus is faithful to you! He will make you strong spiritually and he will protect you from Satan, the evil one. **4** Because you are joined to our Lord Jesus, we are also confident that you are now obeying what we have commanded you, and that you will obey what we are commanding you **in this letter**. **5** We pray that our Lord Jesus would continue to help you to experience how much God loves you as well as to experience the endurance that the Messiah will give you.

6 Our fellow believers, accept what we say now as if our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself were saying this: we command you to stop associating with every fellow believer who is lazy and refuses to work. These people are not living in the way that Jesus taught us and that we in turn have taught you. **7** We tell you this because you yourselves know that you should behave just as we behaved. We did not just sit there without working while we were living among you. **8** That is to say, we did not eat anyone's food if we did not pay for it. Instead, we worked very hard all the time **to support ourselves**. We did that so that we would not have to depend on any of you **for what we needed**. **9** God has certainly authorized us to receive what we need from his people. But instead of demanding things from you, we worked hard so that you could see how God wants his people to live, and then you could live in just the same way. **10** Remember that when we were there with you, we kept commanding you that if any fellow believer refuses to work, you should not give him food to eat. **11** Now we tell you this again, because people have told us that some of you are lazy and not working at all. Not only that, but some of you are interfering with what other people are doing.

12 Accept what we say now as if the Lord Jesus the Messiah himself were saying this: We command and urge those fellow believers who are not working to mind their own business and to work so that they have what they need to live.

13 As for you fellow believers who are working hard, do not ever get tired of doing what is right!

14 If any fellow believer does not obey what we have written in this letter, publicly identify that person. Then do not associate with him, in order that he may become ashamed **that he is not working**. **15** Do not think of him as though he were your enemy; instead, warn him as you would warn your other fellow believers.

16 I pray that our Lord, who is the only one who can truly make anyone peaceful, will make you peaceful in every way and in all situations.

I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to help you all. **17** **Now I have taken the pen from my scribe, and** I, Paul, am sending this greeting to you as I write this myself. I do this in all my letters in order that you may know that it is truly I who have sent this letter. This is how I

always end my letters. **18** I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly to you all.

1 Timothy

1 **1** I, Paul, write this letter to you. God is the one who rescues us, and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is the one whom we confidently expect. The two of them ordered me to represent Jesus the Messiah.

2 I send this letter to you, Timothy.

You have become like my own son because we both trust in Jesus. May God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, continue to be kind and merciful to you and make you peaceful.

3 As I asked you when I was traveling to the province of Macedonia, I ask you again to stay in the city of Ephesus. That way, you can prohibit certain people there from teaching things that are different from what is true. **4** I want you to tell them to stop focusing on legends and very long lists of ancestors. Those things cause people to argue with each other. They do not help to accomplish God's plan. That happens when we trust in Jesus. **5** I want you to require those things so that people will love each other. They will do that while they desire only what is good, while they know that they are doing what is right, and while they genuinely trust in Jesus. **6** However, some people have failed to do those things. Instead, they speak about things that do not matter. **7** Those people desire to be people who teach the Jewish law. However, they do not understand what they talk about or what they confidently affirm.

8 We believers understand that the Jewish law is excellent as long as people use it properly. **9** Indeed, we believers realize that God did not establish the Jewish law for people who do what is right. Rather, he established the Jewish law for people who do what is wrong and do not obey anyone. They do not honor God, and they sin. They do things that defile themselves, and they do not set themselves apart for God. They murder their parents. They murder other people. **10** They act in sexually improper ways. They have sex with people of the same gender. They sell other people as slaves. They lie even when they solemnly promise to say what is true. When people teach them what is right, they always do the opposite. **11** When people teach what

is right, it fits with the good news, which shows how great is the God whom we praise. That is the good news that God has told me to proclaim to people.

12 I thank Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, who has enabled me to proclaim the good news. I thank him because he decided that he could trust me, so he appointed me to serve him. 13 Jesus did that even though I used to insult him, harm his people, and act violently. However, I did not understand what I was doing when I did not trust in Jesus. So, Jesus acted mercifully to me. 14 Our Lord Jesus acted extremely kindly to me. By uniting me to himself, Jesus the Messiah, he enabled me to believe in him and to love people.

15 Everyone should trust and rely on this statement: "Jesus the Messiah was here on earth to rescue sinful people." As for me, I am more sinful than everyone else. 16 However, that is why Jesus acted mercifully to me. That way, Jesus the Messiah could show how very patient he is by how he treated me, the most sinful person. He wanted to illustrate his character for people who are going to trust in him so that they live with God forever. 17 God is always ruling. He will never die, and no one can see him. There are no other gods. So, let us praise and glorify him forever! May it be so!

18 Timothy, you are like my son. I have told you to do certain things because they fit with what people previously prophesied about you. I have told you to do those things so that, as those people prophesied, you will serve God well, as a soldier obeys a commanding officer. 19 You can do that by trusting in Jesus and by knowing that you are doing what is right. Some people have stopped doing that, and now they no longer trust in Jesus. 20 Among those who have done that are Hymenaeus and Alexander. I have expelled them so that Satan rules over them. That way, they will learn not to insult God.

2 1 So then, I ask believers to focus especially on praying for all people. Believers should be thankful for these people and ask God to act kindly to them. 2 They should pray particularly for kings and for everyone who rules over other people. That way, we believers can live calmly and peacefully, and we can honor God and act in ways that others respect. 3 It is right to pray like that, and it pleases God. He is the one who rescues us. 4 God wants to rescue all people. He wants everyone to understand what is true. 5 You can tell that God wants those things to happen because God is the only God. Further, Jesus the Messiah is the only one who reconciles God

and humans. He is human himself. 6 He chose to die so that he could free all people from their sins. That is what believers testify to during this time when it is right to do so. 7 It was to testify in that way that Jesus appointed me to speak for him and to represent him. Jesus also appointed me to instruct non-Jewish people about what is true and about what to believe. As surely as God has united me to the Messiah, I am not telling you what is false, but what is true!

8 Next, wherever you worship God, here is how I desire men to pray: They should not be angry or quarreling with each other. Instead, they should pray in a way that honors God.
9 Similarly, when you worship God, here is how I desire women to dress: They should be modest and control themselves by wearing appropriate clothing. They should not wear elaborate hairstyles, golden jewelry, pearls, or clothes that cost much money. 10 Instead, they should focus on doing what is right. That is appropriate for women who claim to honor God.

11 Women should learn unobtrusively. They should always honor and obey the people who lead their group of believers. 12 Further, I do not allow women to teach or to rule men. Instead, they should behave unobtrusively. 13 What you can read in the Scriptures supports what I have commanded, since God made the first man Adam before he made the first woman Eve.
14 Further, the talking snake did not convince Adam to do what was wrong. Rather, the talking snake convinced the woman, Eve, to do what was wrong. So, she disobeyed what God had commanded. 15 However, God would eventually rescue Eve by sending the Messiah through women having children. Along with her, God will save other women as long as they continue to trust in Jesus, love other people, act as those who belong to God, and control themselves.

3 1 Everyone should trust this statement: “People who want to lead the rest of God’s people are seeking to do something that is good.” 2 Because doing that is good, those who lead the rest of God’s people must be those whom no one can rightly accuse of doing anything wrong. They must be sexually faithful to their wives. They must not do everything that they desire. They must control themselves. They must act in appropriate ways. They must welcome guests into their homes. They must be good at teaching others. 3 They must not be alcoholics. They must not like to fight and argue. Rather, they must treat others kindly. They must avoid fighting. They must not desire to have more money. 4 They must direct their own families rightly. Their children must honor and obey them and always act in ways that others respect. 5 After all,

people who cannot direct their own families will not be able to care properly for any group of believers belonging to God. **6** They must not have only recently trusted in Jesus. Otherwise, they might become prideful. Then, God would punish them as he punished Satan. **7** Further, those who lead the rest of God's people must be those about whom nonbelievers say good things. That way, people do not insult them and Satan will not be able to control them.

8 Similarly, those who serve the rest of God's people must be those whom others respect. They must consistently speak what is true. They must not drink too much alcohol. They must not want more than they need. **9** They should know that they are doing what is right as they remain faithful to what God has revealed, which is the good news that we trust. **10** Further, the group of believers must also evaluate how they behave. After that, as long as they consistently do what is right, they can serve the rest of God's people.

11 Similarly, the women who serve the rest of God's people must be those whom others respect. They must not say mean or false things about other people. They must not do everything that they desire. They must always act faithfully.

12 The men who serve the rest of God's people must be sexually faithful to their wives. They must direct their own families, especially their children, rightly. **13** They should act in all those ways because those who serve the rest of God's people rightly will be people whom other believers honor. Also, they will very boldly trust in Jesus the Messiah.

14 I plan to visit you soon. However, I am sending this letter to you now. **15** That way, even if I cannot visit you soon, you will understand how people who are like God's own family should act. I am speaking about the group of all believers who belong to the only real God. These believers preserve and testify to what is true. **16** Everyone must agree that what God has revealed that enables us to honor him is marvelous:

> "People saw the Messiah as a human.
> The Holy Spirit declared that he was who he claimed to be.
> Angels saw him.
> Believers proclaimed who he was to non-Jewish people.
> People in many places trusted in him.
> God brought him up into heaven in a glorious way."

4 **1** The Holy Spirit has declared clearly that some people will stop believing in **Jesus** when this time period is about to end. Instead, they will focus on evil spirits who convince people to believe what is wrong. They will focus on what demons teach. **2** **They focus on those things** because they listen to people who pretend to teach what is true but who actually teach what is false. These teachers refuse to accept that what they are doing is wrong. **3** They command people not to marry others. **They command people** not to eat certain kinds of food. However, God made those foods so that people would thank him for them and eat them. **He made those foods** for people who trust in **Jesus** and who understand what is true. **4** **I say that** because everything that God made is good. People can eat any **kind of food** as long as they thank God for it. **5** **That is** because what God has said and what people pray makes the food holy.

6 When you instruct your fellow believers about those things, you will be serving Jesus the Messiah well. You will become spiritually stronger because of the good news that you have believed, which includes the correct teachings that you have accepted. **7** You should refuse to listen to silly legends that have nothing to do with God. Instead, you should work hard to honor God. **8** Here is what I mean: working hard to make your body stronger is helpful for a little while. However, working hard to honor God is helpful at all times. When you do that, you can confidently expect to live **with God** both now and also when God makes you alive again. **9** Everyone should trust and rely on this statement, **10** since it is why we work so hard: "We confidently expect that the only real God **will do what he has promised**. He is the one who rescues all people, but particularly those who trust in **Jesus**."

11 Instruct people about **what I have told you**. Require them to do those things. **12** Do not allow anyone to consider you to be unimportant because you are young. Instead, show other believers how to live. Show them that by how you speak, how you behave, how you love others, how you trust in **Jesus**, and how you avoid what is evil. **13** While I am not with you, be sure to continue reading **the Scriptures to the believers when you meet together**, instructing **the believers**, and urging **them to do what is right**. **14** Be sure to do what God has graciously enabled you to do. God enabled you to do that when someone spoke to you for God and the leaders of the group of believers touched you.

15 Consistently do what I have told you to do! Focus on those things. That way, everyone will notice that you are serving Jesus better. 16 Make sure that you behave properly and that what you teach is right. As long as you do what I have told you to do, you will rescue yourself and anyone who listens to you. So, keep doing what I have told you to do.

5 1 Do not scold a man who is older than you are. Instead, speak to him as if he were your father. Speak to men who are younger than you are as if they were your brothers. 2 Speak to women who are older than you are as if each one were your mother. Speak to women who are younger than you are as if they were your sisters. When you do that, avoid everything that might be improper.

3 As for women whose husbands have died, treat them respectfully by taking care of them. I am speaking of women who have no close relatives and whose husbands have died.
4 However, suppose that women whose husbands have died have children or grandchildren. In that case, those children or grandchildren should, most importantly, practice honoring their own family members by taking care of them. In that way, they will do for their parents and grandparents what their parents and grandparents did for them. That pleases God. 5 Women who have no close relatives and whose husbands have died confidently expect that God will help them. They persistently pray to God all day long. 6 On the other hand, some women whose husbands have died do whatever they want to do. These women are like dead people even though they are alive. 7 Require the believers there to do what I have just written. That way, no one can rightly accuse them of doing anything wrong. 8 Suppose that believers do not take care of their relatives, particularly their close family members. Those people show that they do not really trust in Jesus. They have sinned more than people who never trusted in Jesus.

9 When you add a woman whose husband has died to the list of women that the group of believers will take care of, here is what she must be like. She must be at least 60 years old. She must have been sexually faithful to her husband. 10 People must say that she does what is right. For example, she might have brought up children. She might have welcomed people from a different place. She might have cleaned the dirty feet of God's people. She might have helped people who were suffering. In general, she must have persisted in always doing what is good.

11 However, do not add women whose husbands have died and who are still young to the list of women that the group of believers will take care of. These women may choose to do whatever they want instead of doing what the Messiah wants. So that they can do whatever they want, they will desire to marry even an unbeliever. **12** So, they have ceased to trust in Jesus as they used to do. Therefore, God will punish them. **13** In addition to that, these women may also practice avoiding work. Instead, they may visit one person's home after another. In addition to avoiding work, they may also talk too much and interfere with what others are doing. They may talk about things that they should not talk about. **14** Because of all that, I recommend that women whose husbands have died and who are still young should marry again. They should have children. They should direct their own families. They should act in such a way that Satan cannot insult any believers. **15** I have written those things because some women whose husbands have died and who are still young are already doing what Satan wants instead of what God wants.

16 Suppose that a woman who trusts in Jesus has in her family some women whose husbands have died. She should be the one who helps them. That way, the group of believers will not have to provide for too many women whose husbands have died. Then, the group of believers will be able to help women who have no close relatives and whose husbands have died.

17 The leaders who rightly direct believers deserve to have those believers respect them and take care of them. The leaders who work hard to proclaim the good news and instruct others about it particularly deserve that. **18** You know that this is right because Moses wrote in the Scriptures: "You should not keep an ox from eating the grain when it is helping you separate grain from chaff." Further, Jesus said, "Workers deserve to have people pay them for their work." **19** When someone claims that a leader has done something wrong, you should only listen if at least two or three people say the same thing about that leader. **20** When any leaders have sinned, you should confront them with what they have done in front of everyone. That way, the other leaders will be afraid to sin too. **21** God, Jesus the Messiah, and the angels whom God has selected are listening right now and agreeing with me as I command you to do what I have instructed you to do. You should do those things fairly, without favoring one person over another.

22 You should not too quickly touch people to appoint them as leaders. When they sin, you
should not approve of it. You should avoid what is evil.

23 You should not drink only water. Instead, you should have a small amount of wine. It
will make your stomach feel better and reduce how often you are sick.

24 When some people sin, everyone knows about it before God punishes them. However,
when other people sin, everyone knows about it only after God punishes them. 25 In the same
way, when people do what is right, everyone knows about it. Even when people do not seem to
know about it, eventually everyone will know about it.

6 1 All believers who are slaves should treat their masters as people whom they should
respect in every way. That way, no one will insult God or what we teach. 2 Some believers who
are slaves have masters who trust in Jesus. Those slaves should not disrespect their masters
because they are fellow believers. Instead, since the masters for whom they do what is good
are people who trust in Jesus and whom God loves, those slaves should work for their masters.
Instruct people about those things and tell them to do them.

3 Some people teach things that are different from what is true. They do not accept the right
message that comes from our Lord Jesus the Messiah. They do not accept what we teach that
enables people to honor God. 4 These people are prideful. They know very little, but they
obsess over resolving controversial issues and debating what words mean. When people act in
that way, they become jealous of others. They fight with each other. They insult each other.
They act in evil ways by suspecting others. 5 They frequently irritate each other. These are
people who can no longer think properly. They cannot learn what is true. They think that
honoring God is a good way to acquire money.

6 However, we do acquire something valuable when we honor God while we are grateful
for whatever we have. 7 We should focus on acquiring things besides money because we owned
nothing when our mothers gave birth to us. Indeed, we will no longer own anything when we
die. 8 So, we should be content as long as we can eat and have clothes to wear. 9 As for
people who desire to become wealthy, they often think about sinning. They cannot stop what
they are doing. The things that they want are senseless and bad for them, and they will

eventually destroy these people. **10** That is because people do all sorts of evil things when they strongly desire to have money. When some people started desiring money, they stopped trusting in Jesus. By doing that, they have made themselves sorrowful in many ways.

11 However, you are a man who serves God. You must avoid those evil things. Instead, you should always try to do what is right. You should honor God. You should trust in Jesus. You should love others. You should persevere when difficult things happen to you. You should be gentle with people. **12** You should persist in trusting in Jesus just as soldiers battle their enemies. You should make sure that you will live with God forever. God chose you for that. Also, that is why you claimed that you trusted in Jesus while many people listened to you. **13** God is the one who enables everything that exists to live. Jesus the Messiah is the one who declared what was true when he was on trial before Pontius Pilate. They authorize what I am about to tell you to do. **14** You must obey what God has commanded. You should obey completely. No one should be able to rightly accuse you of doing anything wrong. Continue to obey until our Lord Jesus the Messiah returns to this world. **15** God will cause Jesus to return at the right time. We praise God! There are no rulers more powerful than he is. He is king over all other kings. He is lord over all other lords. **16** God is the only one who can never die. His place in heaven is so bright that no one can go near it! No human has looked at him, and no human can look at him. Let us praise him and acknowledge that he is powerful forever! May it be so!

17 You should tell believers who are wealthy right now that they should not think too highly of themselves. They should not trust in all the things that they have, because they cannot be certain how long they will have them. Instead, they should trust in God. He is the one who abundantly gives us everything that we have so that we can enjoy it. **18** Tell those wealthy believers that they should do very many good things. They should be ready to give away what they have. **19** If they do those things, they will establish the good things that they will have when God renews this world. When they do those things, they make sure that they will truly live with God.

20 Timothy, carefully preserve the true message that God has given to you. Refuse to listen when people say things that mean nothing and that have nothing to do with God. Do not pay attention when people argue against the good news, using what they claim is true. It is not really true. **21** The people who claim those things have failed to persist in trusting in Jesus.

I pray that God will be kind to you all.

2 Timothy

1 **1** I, Paul, write this letter to you. God chose to send me to represent Jesus the Messiah. So, I tell others that God has promised that people whom he has united to Jesus the Messiah will live with God forever.

2 I send this letter to you, Timothy. I love you as if you were my own son.

May God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, continue to be kind and merciful to you and make you peaceful.

3 I worship God just as my parents and grandparents did, and I know that I am doing what is right. I thank God when I pray for you, which I do very frequently. **4** I think about how you cried when I left you, and I desire to be with you again. Then I will rejoice greatly. **5** I also think about how you truly trust in Jesus. Your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice first trusted in him. I know that you also trust in him like they do!

6 Because you truly trust in Jesus, I urge you to continue to eagerly do what God has graciously enabled you to do. God enabled you to do that when I touched you to authorize you. **7** You should eagerly do that because God did not cause us to be afraid. Instead, he enabled us to serve him powerfully, to love others, and to control ourselves. **8** Because of that, do not think that telling people about our Lord Jesus disgraces you. Do not think that I, who am in jail because of him, disgrace you. Instead, you should be willing to let bad things happen to you, as they have happened to me, so that you can proclaim the good news. God will enable you to endure those bad things. **9** He is the one who rescued us and chose us to be people whom he sets apart for himself. He did not do those things because of what we had done. Rather, he did those things because he wanted to and because he decided to act kindly toward us. Before the world began, he prepared to act kindly toward us when he would unite us to Jesus the Messiah. **10** Now is the time when we can experience how God acts kindly toward us. That happens because Jesus the Messiah, the one who rescues us, came to this world. He has made it so that, when people die, they do not have to always be dead. He has given us the good news, which

shows us how we can live with God forever and never die. 11 For the sake of that good news,
God commissioned me to speak for him, to represent Jesus, and to instruct people. 12 Because
God commissioned me to do those things, bad things are happening to me. However, I do not
think that experiencing those bad things disgraces me. That is because I understand who God
is. He is the one in whom I have trusted. I am sure that he will preserve what I have given to
him until Jesus returns to this world.

13 You should maintain the basic parts of the right message that you learned from me. As
you do that, you should trust in Jesus and love others. You can do those things because God
unites you to Jesus the Messiah. 14 You should carefully preserve the true message that God
has given to you. The Holy Spirit who empowers us will enable you to do that.

15 You realize that almost all the believers in the province of Asia Minor have left me,
including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

16 I pray that the Lord Jesus will be kind to Onesiphorus and his family. I pray that since
he often encouraged me. Further, even when people put me in jail, he did not think that I
disgraced him. 17 In fact, when he came here to the city of Rome, he kept looking for me until
he located me. 18 So, I pray that the Lord Jesus will be kind to Onesiphorus when the Lord
Jesus returns to this world. Additionally, you realize how much Onesiphorus helped me when
we were in the city of Ephesus.

2 1 As for you, Timothy, you are like my own son. Allow God to make you spiritually
stronger as he acts kindly toward you. He acts kindly toward you because he has united you to
Jesus the Messiah. 2 You have listened to the things that I teach, and many people have
confirmed them to you. You must teach other people those same things. Those people must be
trustworthy and good at teaching even more people. 3 You should be willing to let bad things
happen to you, as they have happened to me, when you obey Jesus the Messiah. Then, you will
be like a good soldier, who obeys his commander even if bad things happen to him. 4 Consider
this: soldiers focus on doing what their commanders want. Because of that, they do not
participate in what civilians normally do. 5 Consider this too: when an athlete disobeys the
rules, the referee does not name that athlete the winner. 6 Finally, consider this: people who
labor to grow crops should be the first people to receive some of what they grow. 7 Consider

the three examples that I have just written to you. The Lord Jesus will enable you to learn completely what they mean.

8 Focus on Jesus the Messiah, whom God made alive again. He is a descendant of King David. That is the good news that I proclaim. **9** Because I proclaim that good news, bad things happen to me. In fact, I am now in jail, as if I had done something wrong. However, no one can prevent people from hearing the message from God. **10** Because that is true, for the sake of those whom God has chosen, I always persevere when bad things happen to me. That way, God will rescue them, like me, by uniting them to Jesus the Messiah, and they will be glorious forever.

11 Everyone should trust this statement:

"It is as if we died with Jesus when he died.
So then, we will also live forever with him.
12 Suppose that we persevere when bad things happen to us.
Then we will also rule over everything with him.
Suppose that we say that we do not know him.
Then he also will say that he does not know us.
13 Suppose that we stop being loyal to Jesus.
Then he continues to be loyal to us.
That is because he always acts based on who he is."

14 Teach those things again to the believers who are with you. God is listening and agreeing with you as you command them not to debate about what words mean. Debating like that does not help anybody. Further, it harms the people who listen to it. **15** Eagerly desire to be a person whom God considers to be acceptable to him. To do that, you should serve God by properly explaining the true message. Then, nothing can disgrace you. **16** Do not listen when people say things that mean nothing and that have nothing to do with God. Those people dishonor God more and more. **17** Further, what they say will spread as an infectious disease does. Hymenaeus and Philetus are examples of such people. **18** These two men have failed to believe and teach what is true. Instead, they claim that God has already made everyone alive again. In this way, they cause some people to stop trusting in Jesus. **19** Despite that, God

preserves his people. They are like a building that has a solid foundation, which God has guaranteed with two statements. Here is the first statement: "The Lord Jesus realizes which people belong to him." Here is the second statement: "Everyone who claims to serve the Lord Jesus must stop doing what is wrong."

20 Consider this example: a wealthy person's house contains utensils that someone made out of valuable materials like gold and silver. Such a house also contains utensils that someone made out of less valuable materials like wood and clay. People use the valuable utensils to perform dignified tasks. In contrast, they use the less valuable utensils to perform undignified tasks. **21** So then, suppose that some people avoid doing what is evil. Those people will be like the utensils that people use to perform dignified tasks. God will set them apart for himself. They will serve God well. God will enable them to do everything that is right.

22 You must avoid desiring the wrong things that young people usually desire. Instead, you should always try to do what is right. You should trust in Jesus. You should love others. You should live peacefully with others. You should do those things along with people who desire what is good and who worship the Lord Jesus. **23** Refuse to discuss controversial issues that uninformed and unwise people care about. You realize that discussing those issues makes people quarrel with each other. **24** People who serve the Lord Jesus must not quarrel. Instead, they must be kind to all people. They must be good at teaching others. They must endure when bad things happen to them. **25** They should gently instruct the people who argue against them. Then God may enable those people to stop believing what is wrong and instead understand what is true. **26** Previously, Satan was able to control them so that they did what he wanted. However, after you instruct them, Satan may no longer be able to control them, and they may be able to think clearly again.

3 **1** You need to understand that the final time period before Jesus returns to this world will be very dangerous for believers. **2** It will be dangerous because people will care about themselves more than they care about anyone else. They will strongly desire to have money. They will say great things about themselves. They will think too highly of themselves. They will insult God and others. They will fail to do what their parents require. They will not thank anyone for anything. They will not honor God. **3** They will fail to care for others. They will refuse to forgive anyone. They will say bad things about others. They will fail to control

themselves. They will act in brutal ways. They will hate everything that is good. **4** They will betray others. They will act without thinking first. They will be prideful. They will care about whatever makes them feel good instead of loving God. **5** They will appear to honor God, but they will refuse to actually do so. Stay away from such people.

6 Further, some of those people convince others to invite them to their homes. While they are there, they start to control what any spiritually immature women who live there think. These are women who have sinned very often. They do all the many things that they want to do. **7** They keep learning new things, but they can never understand what is true. **8** You know how Jannes and Jambres, Pharaoh's magicians, tried to stop Moses from freeing the Israelites. Much like that, the false teachers I am speaking about try to stop others from learning what is true. These false teachers are people who can no longer think properly. When they claim to believe in Jesus, God does not approve of them. **9** However, they will not be able to convince many more people. That is because everyone will realize that they are foolish. That is just what happened to Pharaoh's magicians.

10 In contrast, as for you, you know what I do, and you imitate me. I teach others. I live to please God. I focus on what God has called me to do. I trust in Jesus. I do not easily become angry. I love others. I persevere when bad things happen to me. **11** People hurt me. I experience painful things. I experienced those kinds of painful things when I was in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Even when people hurt me in those ways, I persisted in serving God. When any of those bad things happened to me, the Lord Jesus delivered me. **12** Indeed, people will hurt all men and women who desire to live in a way that honors God as God unites them to Jesus the Messiah. **13** On the other hand, people who do what is wrong and people who try to trick others will become more and more evil. They will deceive others, and people will deceive them. **14** In contrast, as for you, you realize who taught you what you have learned and what you are sure about. So, you should persist in believing those things. **15** Further, you should persist in believing those things because you realize that you have heard what God says in the Scriptures from the time when you were a young child. The Scriptures enable you to think wisely. That way, when you trust in Jesus the Messiah, God rescues you.

16 All the Scriptures come from God's Spirit. They are useful for teaching people. They are useful for telling people that they have done what is wrong. They are useful for telling people

what is actually true. They are useful for instructing people in how to do what is right. 17 As a result, people who serve God have everything that they need. They are ready to do everything that is right.

4 1 God and Jesus the Messiah are listening right now and agreeing with me as I command you to do what I am about to tell you. Remember that Jesus will soon decide whether everyone who is alive and everyone who has died is guilty or innocent. You should focus on what I am about to command you as much as you expect Jesus to return to this world and to rule over everything. 2 Here is what I want you to do: you must proclaim the good news. Be ready to do that when it is a good time to do so and also when it is not a good time to do so. When people have done what is wrong, confront them. Warn them not to sin. Encourage them to do what is right. As you do all those things, never become angry quickly, and always instruct people. 3 I tell you to do those things because later on people will refuse to listen when others teach them what is right. Rather, they will do what they want by collecting many instructors. They will be eager to listen to what pleases them. 4 They will stop listening to what is true. Instead, they will focus on legends. 5 In contrast, as for you, you must control yourself at all times. You must be willing to allow bad things to happen to you. You must do what you have to do in order to proclaim the good news. You must complete everything you must do to serve Jesus.

6 I tell you to do those things because I will soon die. God is even now treating me as if I were wine that someone was pouring out to honor him. 7 I am like a soldier who has battled his enemies. I am like a runner who has finished his race. I mean that I have persisted in trusting in Jesus. 8 I can now expect the reward for doing what is right, which God has ready for me. The Lord Jesus, who always evaluates people justly, will give me that reward when he returns to this world. However, I will not be the only one whom he rewards. Rather, he will reward everyone who rejoices when he returns to this world.

9 Please try to visit me here soon. 10 I ask you to do that because Demas has abandoned me since he cares too much about living in this present world. He has left for the city of Thessalonica. Crescens has left for the province of Galatia. Titus has left for the province of Dalmatia. 11 Luke is the only one who is still here with me. When you visit, bring Mark with you. I ask for him because he serves others with me well. 12 As for Tychicus, I told him to go to the city of Ephesus. 13 I left an outer garment with Carpus in the city of Troas. Please bring it

with you when you visit me. Also, please bring with you my books, particularly the ones with leather pages.

14 Alexander, who makes things out of metal, did many bad things to me. The Lord Jesus will punish him for what he has done. **15** He tried very hard to keep us from proclaiming the good news. So, you too need to watch out for him.

16 The first time I defended myself in court, no believers came to support me. Instead, they all abandoned me. I pray that God will forgive them for that. **17** However, the Lord Jesus supported me and made me strong. That way, I could complete proclaiming the good news, and many non-Jews could listen to it. Also, God delivered me from people who would have killed me. **18** I am sure that the Lord Jesus will deliver me whenever people do anything bad to me. He will rescue me so that I can participate in his kingdom, which is in heaven. Let us honor him forever! May it be so!

19 Say hello for me to Prisca, Aquila, and Onesiphorus and his family. **20** Erastus stayed in the city of Corinth. As for Trophimus, he stayed behind in the city of Miletus because he was ill. **21** Please try to visit me here before the winter season. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and the rest of the fellow believers here say hello to you.

22 I pray that the Lord Jesus will be with you, Timothy. I pray that God will be kind to you all.

Titus

1 **1** I, Paul, **write this letter to you, Titus. I** am a servant of God and a representative of Jesus the Messiah. God sent me to teach the people whom he has chosen as his own to trust him more. I work to help his people to know what is true, so that they can live in a way that pleases God. **2** His people can learn how to live like this because they are confident that God will cause them to live forever. Even before the world began, God promised to cause us to live forever, and God does not lie. **3** Then, in God's own timing, he communicated his plan through this message that he trusted me to preach. I do this in order to obey the command of God, who saves us. **4** Titus, you have become like a real son to me because we both now believe in Jesus the Messiah. May God the Father and the Messiah Jesus who saves us continue to be kind to you and keep you peaceful.

5 I left you on the Island of Crete for this reason: that you do the work that is still unfinished and also appoint elders **for the group of believers** in every city, just as I told you to do. **6** Now every elder must be someone whom no one can criticize. He must also have just one wife, his children must trust in God, and people must not consider his children to be out of control or disobedient. **7** Everyone who leads God's people is like the person who manages the servants and property of someone else, but he is doing this for God. So it is necessary for this person to have a good reputation. He must not be proud and he must not get angry quickly. He must not be an alcoholic, not someone who likes to fight and argue, and not a greedy man. **8** Rather than that, he must welcome strangers and love the things that are good. He must always act sensibly and treat other people in a fair and honest manner. He must always act in a way that is right for someone who is devoted to God and he must always control his emotions. **9** He must always believe the true things that we have taught him, and he must live according to them. He must do this so that he can persuade people to live like this too, and so that he can correct people if they do not want to live like this.

10 I tell you these things because there are many people who refuse to obey those who are in authority over them. What these people say has no value. They persuade people to believe

wrong things. The people who are the most like this are the ones who tell all followers of the Messiah to become circumcised. **11** You and the leaders whom you appoint must prevent such people from teaching the believers. They are teaching things that they should not teach, causing entire families to believe wrong things. They only do it so that people will give them money. This is very shameful! **12** One man of Crete, someone his people thought was a prophet, said, “Cretans frequently lie to each other! They are like dangerous wild animals! They are lazy and always eat too much food.” **13** What he said is true, so correct them forcefully so that they may believe and teach correct things about God. **14** In order to believe correct things about God, they must stop living according to stories invented by the Jews and commandments that did not come from God. These commandments came from people who have stopped obeying what is true. **15** If some people only want to do or think about doing good things, then everything that they do is good. But if people are wicked and do not believe in the Messiah Jesus, everything that they do is bad. Such people’s way of thinking has been ruined. They do not even feel guilty when they do what is evil. **16** Even though they claim to know God, what they do shows that they do not know him. They are disgusting. They disobey God and can do nothing good for him.

2 **1** But as for you, Titus, teach people the things that agree with what you know is true about God. **2** Tell the older men that they must control themselves at all times, that they must live in a way that other people respect, and that they must act sensibly. Tell them that they must also firmly believe the true things about God, love others truly, and do all these things even when it is difficult. **3** Tell the older women, like the men, to live so that everyone knows that they respect God very much. Tell them that they must not say mean or false things about other people, and that they must not be addicted to drinking a lot of wine. Instead, they should teach others what is good. **4** In this way, they will be able to instruct the younger women to love their own husbands and children. **5** The older women should also teach the younger women to control what they say and do, not to act in a wrong way toward any man, to work well at home, and to do what their husbands tell them. They should do all these things so that no one can mock God’s message to us. **6** As for the younger men, urge them likewise to control themselves well. **7** You yourself must continually do what is good so that others will see what they should also be doing. When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect. **8** Teach people what is right with messages that

no one can criticize. Then, if anybody wants to stop you, other people will shame them because they will have nothing bad that they can justly say about any of us. **9** As for those believers who are slaves, teach them that they should always submit to their masters. Tell them to live in a way that pleases their masters in every way, and to not argue with them. **10** They must not steal even little things from their masters; instead, they should be faithful to them, and they should do everything in a way that leads people to admire all that we teach about God, who saves us. **11** The believers should behave in these good ways because God is offering to save everyone as a gift that no one deserves. **12** By means of this free gift, God trains us to stop doing what is wrong and what people of the world want to do. He teaches us to be sensible, to do what is right, and to obey him while we live during this present time. **13** At the same time, God teaches us to wait for what he will certainly do in the future, which is something that will make us very happy: That is, Jesus the Messiah, our Savior and powerful God, will return to us in a glorious way. **14** He gave himself **to die** in our place so that we can be free to live in the way that God wants us to live, and to remove our sin from us so that we can be a special **group of** people who belong only to him, and who eagerly desire to do what is good.

15 **Titus,** speak about these things. Urge **the believers to live as I have described** and correct **them when they do what is wrong,** using your right to command **them if necessary**. Make sure that everyone pays attention to what you say.

3 **1** Titus, continue to tell our people again that they should obey the people who rule over them. They need to be ready to be helpful whenever they are able. **2** They should not say disrespectful things about anyone. They should be peaceful. They should treat everyone gently and as more important than themselves. **3** We need to remember that there was a time when we ourselves were foolish and unwilling to obey God. We strongly desired to do things that made us feel good, and so we did those things. But then we discovered that we were unable to stop doing those things. We were constantly envying each other and doing other evil things. We caused people to hate us and we hated each other. **4** But then when God showed us that he was acting generously to save us because he loves us, **5** he saved us by removing our sin from us as though he had washed it away. As he did this, the Holy Spirit made us new and enabled us to start living in a new way for God. He did not save us because we do good things, but he saved us because he is merciful. **6** God generously gave us his Holy Spirit when Jesus the Messiah

saved us. **7** When Jesus freely gave himself for us, God declared that everything was made right between him and us. Because Jesus did that, God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we can share in everything that the Lord Jesus has to give us, especially everlasting life with him.
8 This is a statement that everyone can trust. I want you to continually emphasize these things so that those who have believed God may constantly devote themselves to doing those things that are good and that help others. These things are excellent and beneficial for everyone.
9 But many people will want to debate with you about senseless things, such as about lists of Jewish ancestors. They will want to dispute with you about **religious** law and argue with you about many things. Do not engage with them in any of that. Those kinds of things are useless and they do not help you in any way. **10** If someone insists on engaging in these divisive activities after you have warned him one or two times to stop doing it, then have nothing more to do with him, **11** because you know that someone like that has rejected the truth; he is sinning and condemns himself.

12 I plan to send Artemas or Tychicus to you. After one of them arrives, come quickly to me at the town of Nicopolis, because I have decided to stay there for the winter. **13** Do everything you can to equip Zenas the law expert and Apollos for their journey, making sure that they have everything that they need. **14** In the same way, make sure that our people learn to occupy themselves with doing good things for people who need help. By doing this, they will be living in a useful way for God.

15 Titus, all those who are with me greet you! Please greet for us everyone there who loves us as fellow believers. May God continue to be kind to all of you.

Philemon

1 [1] I, Paul, am currently in prison for serving the Messiah, Jesus. I am here with Timothy,
our fellow believer. I am writing this letter to you, Philemon. You also serve the Messiah, and
we love you. [2] I also write to Apphia, our fellow believer, and to Archippus, who is like a
soldier in the way he serves the Messiah with us. I also write to the group of believers that meets
in your house. [3] I pray that God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be
kind to you all and make you peaceful.

[4] When I pray, I always thank my God for you, Philemon, [5] because people tell me how
much you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love him and all of God's people. [6] I also
pray that as you trust in the Messiah, just as we trust in him, you will understand even more all
the good things the Messiah has given to us for serving him. [7] My dear friend, you have
greatly encouraged me and have caused me to rejoice a lot. For you have been encouraging
God's people by how much you love them.

[8] So because you love God's people, and because I am an apostle of the Messiah, I am
completely confident that the Messiah would allow me to command you to do what you should
do. [9] But instead of commanding you, because we love each other, I, Paul, an old man and now
also a prisoner because I serve the Messiah, Jesus, only request that you do this. [10] I am asking
you do something for Onesimus. He has become like a son to me since I told him about the
Messiah here in prison. [11] He was useless to you in the past, but now he is useful both to you
and to me!

[12] Although he is very dear to me, I am sending him back to you. [13] I wanted to keep him
here with me in order that he might serve me in your place, especially while I am still in prison
for preaching the good news about the Messiah. [14] However, I am sending him back to you
because you did not tell me I could keep him here. I want you to help me because you want to
help me, and not because I have forced you to help me. [15] It may be that God allowed Onesimus
to be apart from you during this short time so that he could return to you as a believer and be

with you eternally. **16** This is because Onesimus is no longer just a slave, but he is much more than a slave. For now you can love him as a fellow believer! He is very dear to me, but he is certainly even more dear to you. This is because now he not only belongs to you as a slave, but he also belongs to the Lord.

17 So if you consider me to be your companion in doing the work God has given us, then welcome Onesimus into your home in the same way you would welcome me. **18** But if he has taken anything from you, or if he is in debt to you for anything, I will repay you. **19** I, Paul, am now writing this in my own handwriting: I will repay you whatever he owes you. I am certain that I do not have to remind you that you owe me even more than Onesimus might owe you, because God saved your life when I told you about the Messiah. **20** Yes, my fellow believer, I am saying what you think I am saying. I want you to do this for me because of what the Lord did for you. Give me another reason to be glad that we are both joined to the Messiah.

21 As I write this letter to you, I am sure that you will do what I am asking you to do. In fact, I know that you will do even more than what I am asking you to do.

22 As you do what I am asking you to do, I also ask you to prepare to receive me into your home. Because all of you have been praying for me, I confidently expect that God will allow me to leave prison and to come to you all.

23 Epaphras, who is suffering with me in prison for serving Messiah Jesus, says hello to you. **24** Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who are my partners here, also say hello to you. **25** I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be kind to you. Amen.

Hebrews

1 **1** In the past, God communicated to the Israelite ancestors through people who proclaimed his message. He did this throughout the time during which the ancestors lived, and he used many different means to do so. **2** **However,** when this final time period **began**, God communicated to us through his own Son. God made the world together with him, and God has chosen him to receive everything. **3** In God's Son, we see how glorious God is. In fact, God's Son perfectly shows what God is like. By speaking powerfully, he sustains everything **that God has made**. After he purified his people from the wrong things that they did, he ascended into heaven and began to rule with God **his Father**. **4** **These things about him mean that** he is much greater than the spiritual beings. In the same way, the name that God now calls him is greater than their **names**.

5 **You can tell that God's Son is greater than the spiritual beings** because God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

> "On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father,
> and you are my son!"

He did not say these words about any spiritual being either:

> "I will be his father,
> and he will be my son."

However, he did say these words to his own Son.

6 More than that, when God raised his Son into the heavenly world, he commanded:

> "All the spiritual beings who serve God must honor and praise him."

7 God says this about the spiritual beings:

"I have caused the spiritual beings who serve me to be like the wind and like
burning fire."

8 On the other hand, God says this about his Son:

"You who are God will rule forever,
and you will reign justly over your kingdom.
9 You loved whatever is just, and you hated whatever breaks God's law. Because
of that, I, your God, have caused you to be more powerful and joyful than
anyone else who is with you."

10 And God also says this about his Son:

"You are the Lord, who powerfully created everything that exists when it all
began.
11 All those things will eventually fall apart,
but you keep on living forever.
They are like clothing that becomes old and wears out,
12 and you will remove them and roll them up as if they were old clothes.
In the same way that a person changes clothes, you will change the things that
you created.
In contrast, you are the one who stays the same and lives at all times!"

13 God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

"Rule with me
while I defeat all of your enemies!"

However, he did say these words to his own Son.

14 The spiritual beings are all powerful beings who serve God, and God has sent them to help those whom he will soon save.

2 **1** Because God did say those things to his Son, we need to focus most of all on the good news that we learned. That way, we do not stop believing it. **2** This is important because, when

the spiritual beings gave the law to the people of Israel, what they said was reliable. Further, God justly punished anyone who did not listen to this law or broke it. 3 Since that is true, God will certainly punish any one of us who ignores the message about how God has acted powerfully to save us. It was the Lord Jesus who first spoke this message, and those who listened to him told us the same message reliably. 4 God also has confirmed to us that this message is true by empowering believers to do powerful and amazing things. Further, he gave the Holy Spirit to believers, to each as God chose.

5 Now God has not put the spiritual beings in charge of the heavenly world that he will bring to earth. It is that world about which I am talking. 6 Someone confirmed what I have said when he wrote in the Scriptures,

> "No humans are worthy enough for you to think about them, God!
> No human beings are important enough for you to take care of them!
> 7 Despite that, you created humans to be only slightly less powerful than the spiritual beings,
> and you have greatly honored and empowered them.
> 8 You have put them in charge of everything that you created."

When he wrote, "put them in charge of everything," that means that there is nothing over which they are not in charge. However, at this present time, we do not observe that humans are in charge of everything. 9 However, we do observe Jesus. He is the one who was less powerful than the spiritual beings for a short time, and God has now greatly honored and empowered him. God did this because Jesus died. In this way, God graciously had him die for all people who believe in him.

10 Working in that way was appropriate for God, who created and directs everything that exists. When Jesus began to make glorious everyone who believes in him, who are like his own siblings, God used how Jesus suffered to make him able to save them. 11 Jesus, who sets his people apart for God, and those same people whom he set apart for God, all come from God himself. So, Jesus does not hesitate to refer to them as his own siblings. 12 Jesus calls them his siblings when he says,

> "I will declare to my siblings what you are like, God;

I will praise you when people gather together to worship you."

13 Jesus says further:

"I will rely on him."

And Jesus says further,

"Look at me and God's children whom he has entrusted to me."

14 So, because God's children are human beings, Jesus also became a human being just like them. He did that so that he, by dying, could defeat Satan, who uses the fact that people die to control them. 15 When he did that, he got rid of the way that dying makes us afraid while we live. 16 Jesus became a human being, because he came to help those who belong to Abraham, the ancestor of the Israelites, not to help spiritual beings, as you know. 17 Because that is why he came, Jesus needed to be exactly like us, who are his siblings. That way, he can be the ruling priest who serves God in a compassionate and trustworthy way, so that God forgives what his people did wrong. 18 Jesus can be that kind of priest because he endured painful things and experienced how doing what is wrong seems to be good. So, he can aid everyone who also experiences how doing what is wrong seems to be good.

3 1 My fellow believers, God has set you apart for himself, and he has summoned us together from heaven. Since I have told you what Jesus has done, you should think about him. God sent him to us, and he is the ruling priest in whom we say we believe. 2 He faithfully served God, who made him a ruling priest. He is like Moses, who also faithfully served God as part of God's people. 3-4 Now each building has a builder who made it, and people rightly praise the builder more than they praise the building. Similarly, God is the builder who made everything. Therefore, people should praise Jesus, who is God, more than they praise Moses, whom God made. 5 Moses faithfully served God as one who helped all God's people. In that way, he already proclaimed what God says now about Jesus. 6 But the Messiah is God's Son, who faithfully rules over God's people. As long as we persist in boldly and proudly expecting what God will give us, we belong to those same people.

7 Since we are God's people, we should do what the Holy Spirit says:

> "This day, when you hear the Father speak to you, **8** do not stubbornly disobey
> him. That is what your ancestors did when they rebelled against God and
> provoked him while they lived in the wild places. **9** While they were in those
> places, your ancestors provoked God to see what he would do. They did that even
> though they saw all the amazing things that he did for them **10** during a period of
> 40 years.

So, he was angry with those people, and he said about them, 'They want to do what is wrong all the time. They do not understand how I want them to behave.'

11 So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, 'They will never participate in how I rest!'"

12 Fellow believers, pay attention! Make sure that none of you think in evil and unbelieving ways that would lead you to become disloyal to the only real God. **13** Rather, you should encourage each other to be loyal to God daily, during every day that we call "this day." That way, none of you sin and thus deceive yourselves, which would make you unable to obey God. **14** You should encourage each other, because we share in everything with the Messiah. That is true as long as we persist in trusting him, from when we began to do so until we die. **15** You should encourage each other while the Holy Spirit says,

> "This day, when you hear God speak to you, do not stubbornly disobey him. That
> is what your ancestors did when they rebelled against God."

16 Now you know that it was all God's people, whom Moses led out of the land of Egypt, who listened to God speak and still rebelled against him. **17** You know that it was God's people, who did what was wrong, with whom God was angry for a period of 40 years. They died in the wild places. **18** You know that it was God's people, who did not obey him, to whom he solemnly declared that they would never participate in how he rests. **19** So, we can tell that they could not participate in how God rests because they did not trust in him.

4 **1** So, we can tell that God still promises that his people will participate in how he rests. Because of that, we need to make sure that every one of you really receives what God has promised. **2** We need to make sure of this, because we heard the good news just like they did.

However, because they were not among those people who believed in what they heard, what they heard did not help them. 3 That is because only we who believe in the good news participate in how God rests, but those who do not believe do not participate in it. As the Holy Spirit says, “So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, ‘They will never participate in how I rest!’”

God said this even though he stopped working and rested after he created the world. 4 You know that God rested because of what the Holy Spirit says elsewhere about the seventh day of the week. He says,

> “Then, when it was the seventh day of the week, God finished working to create everything, and he rested.”

5 But note again what God says about the Israelite ancestors in the words that I already quoted:

> “They will never participate in how I rest!”

6 So then, the Israelite ancestors who heard the good news in the past did not obey God, and so they did not participate in how God rests. However, God still wants some people to participate in how he rests. 7 Because of that, the Holy Spirit once more picked a time when we can participate in how God rests. That time is what we call “this day.” He did this when he spoke through David a long time after the Israelite ancestors disobeyed. He said, as I have already quoted,

> “This day, when you hear God speak to you, do not stubbornly disobey him.”

8 So, the Holy Spirit refers to a different day when God’s people can participate in how God rests that comes after the day when Joshua led the Israelite ancestors into the land that God had promised them. This means that when Joshua did that, he did not help them participate in how God rests. 9 So, as you can see, God’s people can still participate in how God rests, just as people rest on the Jewish day of rest. 10 In fact, the people who participate in how God rests also finish what they are doing and rest. They do this just like God finished creating everything and rested. 11 Because of all that, we should focus on participating in how God rests. That way, none of us disobeys God like the Israelite ancestors did.

12 You need to pay attention to these things, because what God speaks is like a person who
lives and does things, including discerning what people think and plan. It does that as if it were
a sword with two very sharp edges that could cut apart people's bones from their tendons and
that could divide up people's inner lives. 13 God knows everything about every person and
thing. Nothing that he created can stay secret when he wishes to examine it. He is the one
about whom we are talking.

14 So, a powerful ruling priest works for us, one who ascended through the heavens. He is
Jesus, God's Son. Because of that, we need to persist in believing what we say we believe.
15 Now the ruling priest who works for us can very well understand how weak we are. In fact,
he experienced many times how doing what is wrong seems to be good, just like we do.
However, he never sinned. 16 So then, we should boldly go closer to God, who rules
graciously. That way, he will act mercifully and kindly toward us when we need him to help us.

5 1 When God appoints a person to be a ruling priest, he selects that person from a group of
people in order to serve God for that group. The ruling priest then presents to God what people
give or sacrifice to take away sins. 2 Every ruling priest is weak. Because of that, he can act
patiently toward those who do not know much about God and toward those who believe and do
what is wrong. 3 Further, because each ruling priest is weak, God requires him to present a
sacrifice to take away his own sins, just like he presents sacrifices to take away the sins of the
rest of the people of Israel. 4 Now people cannot decide to become honorable ruling priests on
their own. Rather, God chooses each person who will be a ruling priest, just like he chose Aaron,
the first ruling priest.

5 Similarly, the Messiah too did not decide to become a glorious ruling priest on his own.
Rather, God the Father chose him to be a ruling priest when he said to him,

> 6 "On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father, and you are my
> son!" Similarly, as you can read in another Psalm, God the Father said to the
> Messiah:
>
> "You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a
> priest."

7 When the Messiah lived with us before he died and came back to life, he often prayed powerfully and sorrowfully to God. He did this because God could rescue him when he died. Because he honored God, God listened to him and made him alive again. 8 Although he is God's Son, he learned what it means to obey God when bad things happened to him. 9 Then, when God finished making him able to do so, the Son became the one who saves forever every person who does what he requires. 10 He did that after God appointed him to be a ruling priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

11 We have many things to talk about with regard to Melchizedek. However, since you do not listen and understand well, these things will be difficult to explain to you. 12 You have believed in the Messiah for long enough that you should be teaching others about God. Instead, though, someone still has to teach you simple things about what God says. You are like babies who have to drink milk rather than being like adults who eat food. 13 All people who know very little about what is right and what is wrong are like people who drink only milk. In fact, they are like babies. 14 On the other hand, people who know much about God are like adults who eat food. These people have consistently practiced how to recognize and then distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

6 1 Therefore, we need to learn more so that we become mature. We should not continue to focus on only the most basic things about the Messiah. In other words, we do not need to learn again about how to stop doing useless things or about how to trust in God. 2 We should not learn again about different ways to baptize people, about putting our hands on others to help them, about how those who have died will live again, or about how God will finally decide whether people are guilty or innocent. 3 At this time, as long as God wants us to do so, we will indeed learn more so that we become mature.

4 Let me tell you about something that cannot happen. Think about people who learned about the good news at one time. They experienced what God gives to his people from heaven, and they received God's Spirit. 5 They experienced how good are the things God says, and they have already begun to experience the powerful things that God will do when he renews the world. 6 Think about what would happen were these people to stop believing the good news. In that case, they cannot repent and believe again. That is because what they did is like selfishly

crucifying and humiliating God's Son. 7 Here is an example: God blesses any field where, once rain falls on it, crops grow that people use. 8 However, when a field produces plants that are useless, it helps nobody, and God will soon curse it. In the end, someone will set fire to it to burn up all the useless plants.

9 Even though I have warned you in this way, fellow believers whom I love, I am sure that you are believing more firmly than I have implied. In fact, I am sure that God has saved you. 10 Indeed, since God always acts justly, he will not overlook how you act and how you love others. You have proved that you do these things to honor God, particularly when you have helped and continue to help God's people. 11 I greatly desire that you all, until you die, continue to focus diligently on fully trusting that God will give to you what you confidently expect. 12 That way, you will not be lazy. Instead, you will do what other believers have done: they have received what God promised them, because they trusted in him and waited patiently.

13 When God said that he would do something for Abraham, he guaranteed it himself. He did that because every other person who could guarantee it is less powerful than God. 14 Here is what he promised to Abraham: "I will definitely bless you, and I will definitely give you many descendants." 15 Because God guaranteed what he promised, and because Abraham persevered in expecting it, God gave him what he had promised, a son.

16 Now, people have someone who is more powerful than they are guarantee what they promise. In fact, when someone guarantees what he or she promises in this way, it definitively concludes whatever people are arguing about. 17 In a similar way, God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to those who would receive what he promised that he would not change what he intended to do. So, he guaranteed what he promised, just like humans do. 18 So, God both promised and swore an oath, and he will not lie about or change either of these things. He did that for us, who have trusted in him to save us. In this way, he encourages us to persist in confidently expecting what he is ready to give us. 19 When we confidently expect what God will give us, it is as if an anchor holds us very securely so that we do not waver from trusting God. Further, when we confidently expect what God will give us, it is as if we had gone into the inner part of the heavenly sanctuary, behind the cloth hanging, and already received it. 20 That is the same place where Jesus went to serve God for us and to open the way for us. He went there

after he became a ruling priest who will always serve God, in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

7 1 Now I will say more about Melchizedek. He ruled the city of Salem, and he served the greatest God as a priest. When Abraham was going home after defeating some of his enemies, Melchizedek met with him and blessed him. 2 Then Abraham gave to him one tenth of everything that he took when he defeated his enemies. The name "Melchizedek" means "just king" in Hebrew. The title "ruler of the city of Salem" means "peaceful ruler," since "Salem" sounds like the Hebrew word for "peaceful". 3 When Moses wrote about Melchizedek, he did not say anything about his father, his mother, his other ancestors, when he was born, or when he died. So, Moses described him as if he were similar to God's Son and as if he always served as a priest.

4 You can tell how important Melchizedek was from how Abraham, the ancestor of all the Israelites, offered him one tenth of the most valuable things that he took when he defeated his enemies. 5 In Moses' law, God spoke to the men who are part of the clan of Levi and who serve as priests. He commanded them to receive one tenth of what the rest of the Israelites, who are their relatives, earned or grew. God commanded this despite the fact that all the Israelites are descendants of Abraham. 6 Now Melchizedek is not part of the clan of Levi. Despite that, he received one tenth of what Abraham took when he defeated his enemies. Further, he blessed Abraham, the man to whom God had promised that he would give him many descendants.
7 Now everyone agrees that more important people bless less important people. So, because he blessed Abraham, Melchizedek is more important than Abraham. 8 In Moses' law, we learn about how priests receive one tenth of what the rest of the Israelites earn or grow, but these priests all die. In the story about Melchizedek, we learn that he also received one tenth of what Abraham took from his enemies, but he continues to live. 9 In fact, in a way, Levi and the priests from his clan gave one tenth of what they had to Melchizedek when Abraham gave him one tenth. This is true even though they are the ones who receive one tenth from what the Israelites have. 10 What I have said makes sense because Levi had not yet been born and was, in a way, still inside Abraham, his great-grandfather, when he and Melchizedek met together.

11 Now God made the law that he gave to the Israelites depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests. So, suppose that people could become what God wanted them to be

through what these priests did to serve God. In that case, God would never have appointed another priest to serve in the way that Melchizedek was a priest instead of in the way that Aaron was a priest. However, God did appoint this kind of priest. 12 You can tell that God made the law depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests, because the law must change whenever the way that people serve as priests changes. 13 You can tell that God has changed how people serve as priests, because Jesus, whom God has called a priest, is not one of the descendants of Levi but is a descendant of one of Levi's brothers. No descendant of this man has served as a priest. 14 In fact, we all know that our Lord Jesus is a descendant of Levi's brother Judah, and Moses did not write down anything about descendants of Judah serving as priests. 15 Further, you can tell even more clearly that God has changed how people serve as priests, since God has appointed a different kind of priest, Jesus, who serves God like Melchizedek did. 16 He serves as a priest because nothing can keep him from living, which makes him a powerful priest. As this kind of priest, he does not depend on what God commanded in Moses' law about how human priests are descendants of Levi. 17 You can tell that this is true about him, because God the Father said to him:

> "You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest."

18 What this means is that God withdrew what he had first commanded about priests. He did this because that way of doing things was ineffective. 19 That way was ineffective because people could not become what God wanted them to be by doing what God previously commanded. Now what this also means is that God provided something better for us to confidently expect. When we confidently expect this, we go closer to God.

20-21 Now God did not guarantee what he said when he made some of the descendants of Levi to be priests. However, he did guarantee what he said when he made the Messiah to be a priest. Here is what God said to him:

> "The Lord has guaranteed what he says,
> and he will not do something else:
> 'You will never stop being a priest!'" So, just as Jesus serves as a greater priest because God guaranteed what he said when he made him a priest,

22 so also there is a better agreement, which Jesus guarantees.

23 Further, each one of the descendants of Levi died and so could not continue to serve as a priest. Because of that, there have been many descendants of Levi who have served as priests. 24 However, Jesus will never die. Because of that, he will always serve as a priest. 25 Because he always serves as a priest, he can fully rescue anyone who, because of what he has done, goes closer to God. He can do that because he will never die and thus can always ask God to help them.

26 Jesus is exactly the kind of ruling priest that we need. He honors God, he does not think about what is evil, and he does not do what would defile him. He is not one of the people who sin, and he now lives in the highest heaven. 27 Now each descendant of Levi who serves as a ruling priest has to present sacrifices to God every day. First, he presents a sacrifice to take away his own sins, and after that he presents a sacrifice to take away the sins of the rest of the Israelites. However, Jesus took away everyone's sins when he presented himself as a sacrifice one time, so he does not need to present many sacrifices. 28 In the end, God commanded through Moses that some people should serve as priests, but these priests are weak and die. In contrast, when God guaranteed what he said, which he did after he had commanded those things through Moses, he enabled his Son to serve always as the most effective priest.

8 1 Here is the main idea that I am writing about: a ruling priest like the one I have described is serving for us. He has gone to be with God the Father in the heavenly places, and he has begun to rule. 2 He serves in the Most Holy Place and in the most real sacred tent. The Lord God, not any human, made this sanctuary.

3 Now God makes people ruling priests so that they can present sacrifices. Because that is what ruling priests do, Jesus too needed to present a sacrifice. 4 So, because the priests who are descendants of Levi already present sacrifices on earth as God commanded, Jesus would not be serving as a priest were he on earth right now. 5 Those priests do what God requires in a sanctuary that models the heavenly sanctuary. You can tell that this is true, because God revealed it to Moses when Moses was going to have the Israelites construct the sacred tent. At that time, God spoke to him, "Make sure that everything about the sacred tent matches the original sanctuary that I revealed to you when you were with me on Mount Sinai!" 6 But here is

what is true **about Jesus**: he serves in a much better way **than the descendants of Levi do**. In the same way, the agreement that God has made with his people through Jesus is greater **than the agreement that God made with the Israelites**. That is because God promised greater things when he made this new agreement.

7 Now **you can tell that** the agreement that God made with the Israelites was not perfect, because God chose to make another agreement. **8** **You can tell that the first agreement was not perfect,** because God declared that the Israelites did not perfectly keep that agreement when he said,

> "Here is what I say to you: Pay attention!
> Soon I will make a new agreement
> with all my people from both the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.
> **9** **That agreement will** not be like the agreement
> that I made with their ancestors
> when I lovingly delivered them
> from the land of Egypt.
> Here is what I say:
> **It will not be like that agreement,** because they did not keep it,
> so I abandoned them.
> **10** This is the kind of agreement
> that I will make with my people, the Israelites,
> very soon.
> Here is what I say:
> I will enable them to understand and obey my laws.
> I will be the God whom they worship,
> and they will be the people whom I care for.
> **11** No one will ever have to instruct another Israelite,
> 'Trust and worship the Lord God.'
> **That is** because all my people will trust and worship me,
> no matter how important or unimportant they are.

12 That will happen because I will mercifully forgive them for the wrong things that
they have done.
I will never again punish them for the sins that they have committed."

13 When God uses the word "new," he means that the earlier agreement with the Israelites is now old. Further, what is old will soon cease to exist.

9 1 As for the earlier agreement that God made with Israel, it required people to worship God in a specific way in a sanctuary on earth. 2 The sanctuary that the Israelites set up was a sacred tent that had two sections. They called the outer section the Holy Place. In it, they put a stand for lamps and a table on which they laid out special bread. 3 The inner section was on the other side of an inner cloth hanging. They called this inner section the Most Holy Place. 4 In it, they put the altar for incense and the sacred chest, both of which they completely coated with gold. In the sacred chest, they put a gold container with manna inside, the food that God gave the Israelites while they lived in the desert. They also put in it Aaron's staff that God caused to produce leaves. They also put in it the stone slabs on which Moses wrote the most important parts of the agreement with God. 5 On top of the sacred chest, they put two statues of glorious spiritual beings with wings. These statues cast shadows on the lid for the sacred chest. However, now is not the right time to carefully discuss each of these objects.

6 After they had set up all those things, the priests went into the outer section of the sacred tent every day to serve God. 7 On the other hand, on only one day a year does the current ruling priest go into the inner section of the sacred tent. He has to take blood from an animal with him, which he presents to God to take away his own sins and the sins that the rest of the Israelites committed by accident. 8 The Holy Spirit shows through what the priests do in the sacred tent that God did not reveal how to enter the heavenly Most Holy Place during the time when he required people to use the first section of the earthly sacred tent. 9 This first section of the earthly sacred tent figuratively describes the time in which those Israelites lived. In that time, priests presented offerings that could not enable the people who brought the offerings to distinguish properly between what is right and what is wrong. 10 They also followed rules that were only about bodily things, including rules about what to eat and drink and how to wash with water often. God gave them these rules to follow until he made a new agreement with his people.

11 In contrast, when the Messiah began to serve as a ruling priest, **he gave us** the good things that we now have. He passed through the **heavenly** sacred tent that functions better **than the earthly one**. God, not humans, made this sacred tent, and it does not belong on the earth. **12** Then, when he went into the **heavenly** Most Holy Place only one time, he did not present blood from animals that someone sacrificed**, like the priests who are descendants of Levi do**. Instead, he presented his own blood and freed **his people** from their sins forever. **13** Now **those priests present** blood from animals that someone sacrificed, and they scatter ashes from a female cow, which they have burned, on unclean people. **When the priests do these things,** they really do cleanse the outside of a person. **14** **Since that is true,** what the Messiah does with his blood cleanses people much more! He presented himself as a perfect sacrifice to God, and the Spirit who lives forever enabled him to do so. He cleanses the inside of you all, removing what you do that accomplishes nothing and enabling you to do what the only real God requires.

15 Because **the Messiah cleanses the inside of people**, God has made a new agreement through him. That way, God gives to those whom he chose what he promised that they would receive forever. **That can happen because Jesus** died to free **his people** from what they did wrong when they disobeyed the agreement that God made with Israel.

16 Now when someone sets up a will, **which is a type of agreement,** that person needs to die before the will becomes effective. **17** In fact, every will is valid only because of a dead person. **That is** because a will is not effective while the person who set it up is alive. **18** Much like that, God definitely required **the Israelites to use** blood when he made the agreement with them. **19** Indeed, after Moses declared everything that God commanded in his law to the Israelites, he picked up **a bowl containing** blood from animals that someone had sacrificed. Then, also using water, red cloth, and parts of a hyssop plant, he scattered the blood on the book **in which he wrote what God commanded** and on all the Israelites. **20** **When he scattered the blood,** he said to them, “This blood signifies **that** the agreement that God made with you **is now effective**.” **21** Moses likewise scattered blood on the sacred tent and on every tool **that the priests used** to serve God. **22** Further, God commanded in Moses’ law that the priests should use blood almost every time they cleansed **people or things**. In fact, God does not forgive anyone unless a priest presents blood **from an animal that someone has sacrificed**.

23 So then, the priests had to sacrifice animals to purify the earthly copy of the heavenly Most Holy Place. Much like that, Jesus had to present an even greater offering to purify the heavenly Most Holy Place itself. 24 When he presented that offering, the Messiah went into the highest heaven, where he reveals himself right now before God to help us. He did not go into a Most Holy Place that humans have made, which is a model of the most real Most Holy Place. 25 Further, he went into the highest heaven to present himself as an offering only once. That is not what the earthly ruling priests do. They go into the Most Holy Place every year and present blood from an animal that someone has sacrificed. 26 If Jesus had actually needed to present himself as an offering more than once, then he would have needed to die very often since the time when God created everything. But here is what is true about Jesus: during this final time period, he presented himself one time only as an offering to make sin powerless. 27 Humans will each die one time only, and then God will decide whether they are guilty or innocent. 28 Much like that, the Messiah presented himself one time only as an offering to take away many people's sins. Then, he will come again to earth, not to take away sins, but to rescue his people, who are persistently expecting him.

10 1 The law that God gave through Moses is not itself one of the wonderful things that God will give to his people. Rather, it only points to those wonderful things. So, even though the people who go closer to God always present offerings year after year, doing so never enables them to be what God wants them to be. 2 Suppose that those offerings actually purified the people who worship God. In that case, they would never feel guilty about their sins, and they would stop presenting offerings. 3 But here is what is true about those offerings: they remind people year after year of their sins. 4 Those offerings can only do that, because blood from animals that someone sacrificed cannot remove people's sins.

5 That is why, when the Messiah came to earth, he spoke to his Father,

"You did not want people to present offerings.
Instead, you made a human body ready for me.
6 You did not enjoy the sacrifices
that people present to take away their sins.
7 So, I spoke these words: 'Here I am!

Someone wrote about me in the Scriptures.
I will do what you want me to do, my God.'"

8 Here is what the Messiah said to God first: "You did not want or enjoy the offerings that people present or the sacrifices that people present to take away their sins." Those offerings and sacrifices are the ones that the Israelites present to God as he required in the laws that he gave through Moses. 9 Then, the Messiah said this second: "Here I am! I will do what you want me to do." He abolishes what he spoke about first in order to set up what he spoke about second. 10 Here is what God wanted: Jesus the Messiah presented his body as an offering one time only, and by that offering, God set us apart for himself.

11 Now all earthly priests have to stand up day after day while they worship God and present many offerings of the same kind. These offerings cannot remove people's sins. 12 In contrast, the Messiah presented a single offering that is always effective in taking away sins. Then, he went to be with God the Father, where he sits on the throne and rules. 13 Right now, he remains there until God defeats all of his enemies. 14 The Messiah remains there, because he presented a single offering, by which he always makes the people whom God is setting apart for himself to be what God wants them to be.

15 God's Spirit too confirms to us that this is true. Here is what he said first in the words that I have already quoted:

16 "This is the kind of agreement that I will make with them,
very soon. Here is what I say:
I will enable them to obey
and understand my laws."

17 Then, God's Spirit said this second in the words I have already quoted:

"I will never again punish them
for the sinful and disobedient things that they have done."

18 When God forgives people for the sinful and disobedient things that they have done, no one again presents sacrifices to take away sins.

19 So then, fellow believers, we can be totally sure that there is a way into the heavenly Most Holy Place **for us**, because of Jesus' blood. **20** Jesus established that new and effective way for us, which passes through the cloth hanging **into the Most Holy Place**. This **cloth hanging figuratively** represents Jesus **while he lived** on earth. **21** Further, **the Messiah is** a ruling priest **who** works for us, God's people. **22** **Because those things are true,** we should go closer **to God**, completely serving him and fully believing in him now that he has purified us on the inside and on the outside so that we no longer feel guilty about evil things **that we have done**. **23** **God,** who promised **these things to us,** will do what he has said. So, we need to persist in fully believing what we say we confidently expect. **24** Further, we need to think about each other, particularly how to encourage each other to love others and to do what is right. **25** **We can do that by** always continuing to gather together **to worship God** and encouraging each other, even though some people often do not **do this**. Since we know that Jesus is coming back soon, we should be very eager to do those things.

26 **We should do all those things,** because whenever we intentionally and habitually sin once we have completely understood the true **message about Christ**, no one can present any offering that will take away our sins. **27** **If we did go on sinning**, all we could do is fearfully wait for God to declare us guilty and, soon after, forcefully punish us as his enemies, **which would be like** flames burning us up. **28** The Israelites would kill any person who completely stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses, as long as at least two or three people confirmed that the person had done that. They would not be merciful to that person. **29** But now consider people who shame God's Son. They treat his blood as if it were ordinary, even though God used that blood to make his covenant and set them apart for himself. They make fun of God's Spirit, who acts graciously. God will rightly punish those people more than **he punished anyone who completely stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses**. **30** **We know that is true,** because we have encountered God, who spoke, "I am the one who will punish people when they act against me. I will do so in a way that they deserve." Further, **he** also **spoke**, "I, the Lord, will decide whether my people are guilty or innocent." **31** Those who deserve the only real God to punish them should be afraid!

32 On the other hand, I want you to think about what it was like when you first learned about the good news. During that time, you continued **to trust God** while you firmly withstood what you suffered. **33** In some cases, people publicly insulted and hurt you. In other cases, you

helped other people who experienced those same things. [34] More specifically, you acted compassionately toward those in jail. Also, you rejoiced even when people took away what you owned. You did that because you recognized that God has something greater and more lasting for you. [35] Therefore, continue to be confident that God will do what he has promised. God greatly rewards those who are confident in this way.

[36] As you can see, you need to continue to trust God. That way, once you have done what God desires, you will receive what he has promised to give to you. [37] Here is what a prophet wrote:

> "Very soon, the person who is going to arrive will arrive.
> He will not wait a long time.
> [38] Further, those who serve me righteously will trust in me while they are alive.
> But suppose they stop trusting in me.
> Then, they will not please me."

[39] However, we are not those who stop trusting in God, whom he will destroy. Rather, we are those who trust in God, so he saves us.

11 [1] When people trust God, it makes them sure that they will receive what they confidently expect. When people trust God, it makes them certain about things that they do not see. [2] In fact, because the Israelite ancestors trusted God, he approved of them. [3] Because we trust God, we recognize that, by speaking, God set up everything that exists. So then, the things we see did not come from other things we can see.

[4] Because he trusted God, Adam's son Abel presented a more acceptable offering to God than did his older brother Cain. Because he trusted God, God approved of him for what he presented and declared that he did what was right. Although Abel died, we can still learn from how he trusted God.

[5] Because Enoch trusted God, God took him to heaven, and so he never died. As Moses wrote, "No one could find him. That is because God took him to heaven." Now before God took Enoch to heaven, he declared that Enoch pleased him. [6] In fact, people can only please

God when they trust him. That is because people who go closer to God have to believe that he is real and that he will reward people who want to serve and worship him.

7 Because he trusted God, Noah honored God by believing him when God revealed to him what he could not yet experience. So, Noah built the ark to rescue his family from the flood that God would send. Since Noah trusted God in this way, he proved that everyone else was guilty. Further, Noah became a person whom God made right with himself because Noah trusted him.

8 Because he trusted God, Abraham did what God said when God spoke to him. He left his home to travel to a location that God would soon make to be his new home. When he left his home, he did not even know exactly where this new home would be. 9 Because he trusted God, Abraham stayed in the country that God had promised to give him, but it was not yet his country. He lived with Isaac his son and Jacob his grandson in temporary shelters, even though God promised to all three of them that he would give them this country. 10 Abraham lived like that because he was looking forward to living in the secure and permanent heavenly city that God created. 11 Because he believed, Abraham was able to have a son with his wife Sarah even though he was old enough that he could not normally have had a child. That happened because he reckoned that God would certainly do what he said. 12 So then, even though he was very old, Abraham had many descendants, the Israelites. Just as God promised, there are as many Israelites as there are many stars in the sky and as there are many grains of sand on a beach by the ocean.

13 All those people trusted God until they died. While they lived, they did not experience what God had promised to give them, but they knew that God would soon do what he had promised. They showed everyone that they did not really belong in this world. 14 Indeed, all people who speak what they spoke about not belonging in this world show clearly that they desire to live in their own country. 15 But suppose these faithful people considered the country they had left to be their own country. In that case, they could have gone back there, but they did not. 16 But here is what is true about them: they longed for a greater country that is in heaven. Because of that, it honors God when other people describe him as the God of these people who trusted him. You can tell that this is true, because God has made a city for them to live in.

17 Because he trusted God, when God tested him, Abraham would have presented his son Isaac as an offering. Indeed, the man to whom God promised many descendants was about to

present as an offering the only child he and his wife Sarah had. 18 In fact, God had already said to Abraham, “The many descendants that I promised to give you will come from your son Isaac.” 19 Abraham acted in this way because he reckoned that God could make dead people alive again. In fact, in a manner of speaking, Abraham did get Isaac back after he had died.

20 Because he trusted God, Isaac blessed his sons Jacob and Esau, declaring what would happen to each of them.

21 Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Jacob blessed both sons of his son Joseph. He praised God while he leaned on his walking stick.

22 Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Joseph spoke about how the Israelites would leave the land of Egypt. Also, he commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.

23 Because they trusted God, Moses’ father and mother kept Moses hidden for 13 weeks after he was born. They bravely disobeyed what the king of Egypt commanded about killing the sons of the Israelites. They did that because they could tell that Moses was a good child.

24 Because he trusted God, when he grew up, Moses rejected how he was living as the adopted son of one of the daughters of the king of Egypt. 25 He decided to experience how people mistreated God’s people rather than to enjoy sinning for a little while. 26 He reckoned that people insulting him because of the Messiah was more valuable than all the valuable things in the land of Egypt. He thought in this way, because he focused on how God would reward him. 27 Because he trusted God, Moses departed from the land of Egypt. He was not afraid of what the king would do while he was angry. He acted in that way, because he continued to trust God as completely as if he could see God, who is invisible. 28 Because he trusted God, Moses led the Israelites in celebrating the first Passover festival and spreading blood from lambs on their doors. They did that so that the spiritual being who killed the eldest children of the Egyptians would not kill their eldest children.

29 Because they trusted God, the Israelites walked across the Sea of Reeds like they were walking on hard ground when God made a path for them. Then, when the Egyptians tried to follow, they drowned in the water when God covered the path.

30 Because the Israelites trusted God, he broke down the walls around the city of Jericho after the Israelites repeatedly marched around the city during one week.

31 Because she trusted God, Rahab, who was a prostitute, kept the spies whom Joshua had sent safe. Because she did that, the Israelites did not kill her when they killed everyone else who lived in Jericho, everyone who did not obey God.

32 I cannot now say any more about this. Indeed, I do not have the time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other prophets. 33 Because such people trusted God, some of them defeated foreign armies. Others ruled justly. Others received what God had promised. Others kept lions from eating them. 34 Others stopped fire from burning them. Others survived when someone violently attacked them. Others became powerful when they were weak. Others fought their enemies powerfully. Others completely defeated soldiers from other countries. 35 Some women experienced how God made their family members who had died to become alive again. However, other people experienced how others intentionally hurt them to make them disobey God. They kept obeying God despite that. That way, God would make them alive again so that they could never die. 36 Further, other people suffered when others made fun of them or struck their backs with ropes. Sometimes, rulers even arrested them and put them in jail. 37 People killed these faithful people by throwing rocks at them or by cutting them in half. People tempted them to disobey God. People killed them with swords. These faithful people wandered around wearing only animal skins. They had nothing, and people persecuted them and treated them badly. 38 People treated them like that even though they did not deserve to live in the same place with those who trusted God. Despite that, these faithful people had to live in wilderness places, on hills, and in caves in the earth.

39 Although God approved of all these people because they trusted him, he did not yet give them what he had promised to give them. 40 Rather, God prepared ahead of time to give us something greater than what those people received while they lived. That way, only when we and they are all together will we all be what God wants us to be.

12 1 So then, because all those people who trusted God are watching us, we need to persevere in trusting God too. To do that, we need to stop sinning and avoid anything else that

could hinder us. [2] We need to focus on Jesus, the one who enables us to trust God at first and then to do so until we die. He himself persevered when he died on the cross, and he did not care that he died shamefully. He acted in those ways because he knew that God would make him joyful afterward. Now, he is with God the Father, where he sits on the throne and rules.

[3] You need to think about Jesus, who persevered when sinners quarreled with him, although they only hurt themselves. That way, you can be strong on the inside and persevere. [4] So far, you have not died while you oppose what is evil and work hard not to sin. [5] Further, you have failed to remember what Solomon encouraged his children to do, which also applies to you. Here is what Solomon wrote:

> "My child, learn carefully when the Lord trains you.
> Indeed, persevere when he corrects you.
> [6] You should do that, because the Lord God trains everyone he loves.
> Indeed, he severely corrects every child he calls his own."

[7] You need to persevere so that God can train you. God acts in these ways toward you because you are his children. You can tell that this is true, because parents always train their own children. [8] Suppose God did not train you, even though he trained everybody else. In that case, you would not actually be God's children. [9] Moreover, our human parents trained us when we were children, and we respected them. So, we should accept it even more when our spiritual Father, God, trains us. That way, we will live forever. [10] Further, our human parents trained us for a short time in the ways that they thought were right. However, God our Father trains us in the ways that are best for us. That way, we become those whom he has set apart, just as he sets himself apart. [11] Whenever God trains us, we hurt rather than rejoice while it is happening. However, once we learn from how God is training us, we are able peacefully to do what is right.

[12] Because of all that, you need to prepare yourselves to persevere in trusting God, just like runners prepare their tired bodies to continue running. [13] You need to focus on trusting and obeying God, just like a runner focuses on running the straightest path. That way, anyone who is spiritually weak will not stop trusting God but will instead trust him more. [14] You should seek to live peacefully with everybody. Also, you should seek to set yourselves apart for God. Only if you do that will you eventually be with the Lord. [15] Make sure that your fellow

believers fully receive what God has given you. Be alert for anyone who begins to behave resentfully and disturbs fellow believers. That may lead many other believers to behave that way as well. 16 Be alert for people who have improper sex or do not set themselves apart for God. These people are like Esau, who allowed his younger brother Jacob to act as the firstborn child in order to get some food from him. 17 You should avoid being like Esau, because you realize what happened to him later. He wanted his father to bless him, but his father refused to do so. As you can see, Esau could not change what he had done, even when he cried while he tried to change it.

18 We have not gone closer to what the Israelites went closer to when they arrived at Mount Sinai. They went closer to a mountain that they could feel with their hands. They saw flames burning, dark clouds, shadows, and a thunderstorm. 19 They heard someone playing a trumpet and God speaking a message. When they heard God speaking, they pleaded for him not to say any more to them. 20 They did that, because they were afraid when God commanded them, "You must kill all people and animals that touch this mountain. You must kill them by throwing rocks at them." 21 Further, when Moses saw how frightening everything was, he said, "I am shaking because I am afraid!" 22 In contrast to that, you have gone closer to a heavenly place, Mount Zion. On this mountain is the city Jerusalem in heaven that belongs to the only real God. In the city are very many spiritual beings who celebrate together. 23 Also in the city are those whose names God has recorded in heaven. They are God's people, his special children. There also is God, the one who decides whether all people are guilty or innocent. There too are those who obeyed God. They died, but God has now made them what he wants them to be. 24 Also in the city is Jesus, through whom God has made a new agreement. There also is Jesus' blood, which purifies us. His blood is more effective than Abel's blood.

25 Make sure that you obey God, who is speaking to you. Consider how some of the Israelites did not obey what God revealed to them from Mount Sinai. God certainly punished them. Now consider how much more God will punish any of us who do not obey what he reveals to us from Mount Zion. 26 When God spoke from Mount Sinai, it made the earth quake. However, at this time he promises, "One more time, I will make the earth and also heaven quake." 27 The words "one more time" mean that God will transform everything that he shakes. He will do that just as he created all those things. That way, everything that he does not shake will last forever. 28 So, we will live in a kingdom that God will not quake. Because of

that, we should thank God. By doing that, we respectfully worship God in a way that pleases him. 29 We should do so respectfully, because the God we worship is as powerful and dangerous as a raging fire.

13 1 Persist in loving your fellow believers. 2 Make sure that you are welcoming other people. You should do that because some people who welcomed others actually welcomed spiritual beings, although they did not know that they were spiritual beings. 3 Be sure to help those who are in jail. You should help them as you would want others to help you were you in jail with them. Also, do not forget to help those whom others treat badly. You should do that because you too are humans who can suffer.

4 All of you should greatly value how God joins people together when they marry. Further, people who marry should have sex only with their spouses. You should do those things because God will declare guilty anyone who has sex with a married person or who has improper sex in any way. 5 You should always avoid desiring money. You can do that by being happy with whatever you have. You should behave in this way, because God has spoken these words to each of you:

> "I will definitely not abandon you.
> Yes, I will always be with you."

6 Because God says that, we boldly speak these words:

> "The Lord God is the one who supports me.
> Because of that, I do not fear anyone.
> No one can do anything to hurt me."

7 Pay attention to the people who were in charge of your group. I mean the ones who told you about what God has done. Examine the good things that happened because of how they lived. You should imitate how they trusted God. 8 Jesus the Messiah has never changed and will never change.

9 Do not let other people mislead you by teaching you many kinds of things that do not fit with the good news. You should reject what they teach, because only what God gives us rightly

makes us strong. The food that we eat cannot do that. In fact, people who act as if food could do that gain nothing. **10** We benefit from Jesus' offering, which is greater than the offerings that the priests presented in the sacred tent. In fact, those priests would be unable to participate in Jesus' offering.

11 In the Most Holy Place, the ruling priest would present blood from animals that he had killed. He did that to take away sins. Someone then would completely burn the remains of these animals away from where the Israelites were staying. **12** Therefore, Jesus too died away from where people lived in the city of Jerusalem. He did that to set God's people apart for himself by offering his own blood. **13** So then, we should abandon everything that could separate us from the Messiah. As we do that, we should accept it when people insult us like they insulted him. **14** We should do that because, here on earth, we do not live in any city that will last forever. Rather, we desire to live in the city that God will soon give us.

15 With Jesus helping us, we should frequently praise God, as if we were presenting offerings to him. We do that when we say that we believe in Jesus. **16** Further, we need to make sure that we help others by giving some of what we have to them. Doing that is like presenting offerings that please God.

17 Those who are in charge of your group know that God considers them responsible for you, and so they always focus on taking care of you. Because of that, you should respectfully do what they require. That way, they can lead your group joyfully instead of sadly. Indeed, if they led sadly, that would not help you at all.

18 Please ask God to help me and those with me. I ask that because we are sure that we are not guilty. Indeed, we always want to behave properly. **19** I urge you still more to ask God to send me back to you quickly.

20 God is the one who makes his people peaceful. He made our Lord Jesus alive again after he had died. Jesus is like a powerful sheepherder who leads us, his sheep. God made him alive again because Jesus used his own blood to make the new covenant that will last forever. **21** We pray that God will provide you with all his good gifts. That way, you can do what he wants you to do. In fact, he works through Jesus the Messiah to enable us to do what pleases him. So, let us honor God forever! May it be so!

22 I have sent you a short letter. So, I ask you, fellow believers, to please consider carefully what I have said to encourage you.

23 I want you to be aware that **the authorities** have released Timothy, our fellow believer. If he arrives here quickly, we will visit you together.

24 Say hello to everyone who is in charge of your group. Also, **say hello to** all God's people. The **believers** who are from the country of Italy say hello to you.

25 **I pray that God will** be gracious to you all.

James

1 **1** I, James, serve God and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. I am writing this letter to you who
believe in Jesus and are living in various parts of the Roman Empire. I greet you all.

2 My fellow believers, consider it something to rejoice over greatly when you experience
various kinds of hardships. **3** Understand that as you trust God in hardships, this helps you to
become a stronger person. **4** Endure hardships to their very end, so that you may follow the
Messiah in every way. Then you will not fail to do well.

5 If anyone of you needs to know what to do, let him ask God, and God will tell him. God
gives generously to everyone. God does not scold people **who ask for things**. **6** But when you
pray to God, you must trust him to answer you. Do not doubt that he will answer and help you.
People who doubt God first decide to do one thing, but then they want to do something else.
They never settle on a single course of action. **7** Indeed, people who doubt should not think
that God the Lord will give them what they ask for **so uncertainly**. **8** People like this can never
decide what to do. They make a plan, but then they do not follow it.

9 Believers who do not have much money should be glad, because God has honored them.
10 But believers who have a lot of money should be glad that God has humbled them **by
showing them that their wealth does not make them better than other people**. After all, like
wildflowers **that bloom for only a short time and then wither**, rich believers will die **like anyone
else**. **11** A wildflower only lasts a short time because when the sun rises, its scorching heat
dries out the plants so that their flowers fall off. They are no longer beautiful. Like the flower
that dies, rich people will die while they are trying to make money.

12 God honors those who remain faithful to him in difficult circumstances. Indeed, God
will reward them by having them live forever. That is what God has promised to do for all who
love him.

13 When we are tempted to sin, we must not think it is God who is tempting us. No, no one can persuade God to do evil, and God never tries to persuade anyone to do evil. **14** But people want to do evil because of their own desires. When they do, it is just as if they had fallen into a trap. **15** Then, because they have desired to do evil things, they begin to do them, and eventually they do them habitually. **If they do not turn away from their sinful behavior,** they will be separated from God forever.

16 My fellow believers whom I love, stop deceiving yourselves. **17** Every truly good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, who is in heaven. He created the sun, moon, and stars. But God does not change the way shadows change, appearing and disappearing. God never changes. He is always good! **18** God became our spiritual father when we trusted in his true message. That was what he wanted to do. So now believers in Jesus have become the first people to experience the kind of relationship with God that many more people will have in the future.

19 My fellow believers whom I love, I want you to know that every one of you should listen patiently **to what others have to say**. You should speak **your own thoughts** carefully. You should control your anger, **20** because when we get angry, we cannot do the good things that God wants us to do.

21 So stop doing all kinds of evil. Without resisting proudly, do what God has told you to do. God will help you to remember and understand it. This will show that you belong to God. **22** It is important to what God commands, do not just listen to it. People who only listen to it and do not obey it are fooling themselves **into thinking that this will save them**. **23** Now some people hear God's message, but they do not do what it says. Those people are like someone who looks at his face in a mirror. **24** Although he looks at himself, he goes away **from the mirror** and immediately forgets what he looks like. **25** But other people consider God's message carefully. It is perfect and it enables people to do voluntarily **what God wants them to do**. If these people remember what they have heard and continue to do what God tells them to do, then God will bless them because of what they do.

26 Some people think that they worship God properly, but they say bad things. Those people are wrong in what they are thinking. God is not impressed with our worship activities if we continually say bad things. **27** **One of the things that God has told us to do is** to take care of

orphans and widows who suffer hardship. People who do that truly worship God, who is our Father. People are also truly worshiping God if they do not think or act immorally like others who do not obey God. God approves of people who do these things.

2 **1** My fellow believers, do not honor some people more than others and at the same time trust in our great Lord Jesus the Messiah. **2** For example, suppose that a person who wears gold rings and fine clothes joins you for worship. And suppose that a poor person who wears shabby clothes joins you as well. **3** And suppose that you show special attention to the one dressed in fine clothes. You tell him, "Please sit here in this nice seat!" But you tell the poor one **to go to a less honorable place, saying**, "You stand over there," or, "Sit on the floor!" **4** This would show that you thought rich people were better than poor people. It would show that you were making your judgments **about how to treat people** based on evil thinking. **5** Listen to me, my fellow believers whom I love. God has chosen poor people who seem to own nothing of value to trust in him very much. He will give them great things when he reigns everywhere. This is what he has promised to do for everyone who loves him. **6** But you have treated poor people disrespectfully! Think about it! It is the rich people, not the poor people, who are causing you to suffer! It is the rich people who forcibly take you to court **to accuse you in front of judges**! **7** And they are the ones who insult you because you are Christians! **8** **So you should not treat rich people better than poor people.** Instead, you should obey the commandment that Jesus said was so important. It is from the law of Moses: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you show love to everyone equally, you will be doing what is right. **9** But if you honor some people more than others, you are doing wrong. And **because you are not doing what God has commanded,** God will say that you have broken his law.

10 **God will say this** because if you break one of God's laws, even if you obey all the other ones, it is just as if you had broken all the laws. **11** For example, God said, "Do not commit adultery," but he also said, "Do not murder anyone." So if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder someone, then you have become a person who disobeys God's laws.

12 **Always** speak and act towards others knowing that God will judge you based on the commandment he gave us **to love others**. When we follow that commandment, we obey God freely. **13** You should speak and act in this way because when God judges us, he will not act

mercifully toward those who have not acted mercifully toward others. But if we are merciful to others, then we can expect that God will be merciful to us when he judges us.

14 My fellow believers, some people say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus the Messiah," but they do not do loving things. What they say will do them no good. If they only believe with words, God will certainly not save them. **15** To illustrate, suppose that a fellow believer, whether a man or a woman, is continually lacking clothes and food for each day. **16** And suppose one of you says to them, "Do not worry, get warm, and have the food you need." But suppose that you then do not give them any clothing or food. Then that will be no help to them! **17** Similarly, if you just say that you believe in Jesus but you do not do anything that demonstrates that, you do not really believe in Jesus.

18 But someone might say to you that you have faith, while I have works. He might claim that a person can express his religion through either faith or works and that he does not need to have both. But I would say in response that you cannot show me your faith without works. I, on the other hand, can show you my faith by my works. **19** Let me illustrate how believing in God without doing what God wants you to do cannot save you. You believe that there is only one true God. You are right to believe that. But the demons also believe that, and they shake with fear because they also know that the one true God is going to punish them. **20** Also, you foolish person, I will give you proof that if someone says he believes in Jesus but he does not do anything that demonstrates that, then what he says does not help him in any way. **21** Here is the proof. Abraham, from whom we are descended, showed that he was willing to offer his son Isaac to God as a sacrifice if God wanted him to do that. God considered Abraham to be a righteous person because he showed that he would obey him and that proved that he genuinely trusted God. **22** In this way, Abraham obeyed God because he trusted him. When he obeyed him, that helped him trust God completely. **23** That was how the scripture came true that says, "Because Abraham truly trusted in God, God viewed him as someone who did what was right." Other scriptures say that Abraham was God's friend. **24** From the example of Abraham, you should recognize that God considers people to be righteous because of what they do, not simply because they trust in him. **25** Just as he did for Abraham, God also considered Rahab to be righteous because of what she did. She had been a prostitute, but she took care of the messengers Joshua sent to spy out the land. She then helped them to escape by sending them back on a safer road.

26 All of this illustrates an important truth. Just as a person's body is not alive if he is no longer breathing, in the same way, a person does not really trust in God if he does not express that trust through what he does.

3 **1** My fellow believers, most of you should not desire to become teachers **of God's word**. As you know, God will judge us teachers more severely **than he will judge other people**. **2** **I will tell you why most of you should not become teachers.** All of us often do things that are wrong. But if anyone is able to avoid saying things that are wrong, he has become the person God intends him to be. He will be able to control all of his actions as well. **3** To illustrate, we can put a small metal bar into the mouth of a horse and use it to make the horse go where we want it to go. When we do that, we can direct the horse's large body **just by means of that small device**. **4** Think about ships too. A ship may be very large and the winds that propel it forward may be very strong. Even so, by using a tiny rudder, the pilot can direct the ship wherever he wants it to go. **5** Similarly, although our tongues are very small, we use them to brag that we have done great things. Note also that a fire that starts as a small flame can burn up many trees.

6 Just as a fire burns a forest, when we say bad things, we hurt many people. **What we say reveals that** there is much evil within us. When we say bad things, this contaminates all that we think and do. It can ruin our whole life. It is Satan himself who influences us to speak what is evil. **7** To give another example, people have been able to tame a wide variety of wild animals, birds, reptiles, and animals that live in the water. **8** But no one can control the things he says. The things people say are like a dangerous creature that never stops killing people with its venom. **9** We use speech to praise **God, who is** our Lord and Father. But we also use speech to say that we want bad things to happen to people. **That is very wrong, because** God made people like himself. **10** Someone may use his speech to praise God. But then he will use that same speech to wish that bad things would happen to people. My fellow believers, this should not happen! **11** Surely good-tasting water and bad-tasting water do not come from the same source! **12** My fellow believers, a fig tree cannot produce olives. And a grapevine cannot produce figs. Nor can a salty source produce good water. **Similarly, we should speak only what is good, and we should not speak what is evil.**

13 If any of you are very understanding, you will demonstrate that by living your life
properly. Being wise leads us to act gently toward others. 14 But if inwardly you grudgingly
resent other people and you think you are more important than they are, you should not claim
to be wise. That would be saying that what is false is actually true. 15 People who are envious
and selfish are not wise as God wants them to be. Instead, they are thinking and acting like
people who do not respect God. They are following their own evil desires. They are doing what
demons would do. 16 We can tell that people who are resentful and selfish are not wise,
because they do not control themselves. They take part in many different sinful activities.
17 But the person whom God has taught to be wise is, first of all, morally pure. Such a person
also makes peace with others. He is kind to them and gets along with them well. He is
generous to people who do not deserve it, and he does practical things to help others. He does
not favor one person over another, and he does not pretend to be something that he is not.
18 When people work quietly to help others get along, they can help those others to have good
relationships.

4 1 I will tell you why you are fighting among yourselves and quarreling with each other. It
is because each of you inwardly desires to do evil things. Those desires lead you to fight **in
order to be able to do those things**. 2 You desire to have things, but you do not get **them**. This
makes you bitterly resent the people who do have them. But you **still** do not get **what you want**,
so you quarrel and fight **with others**. If you pray **to God** instead **for the things you desire**, then
God will give you **what you truly need**. 3 But even when you do ask God for things, he does
not give them to you, because you are asking with bad motives. You are asking for things just
so that you can use them to enjoy yourselves in wrong ways.

4 You are being disloyal to God **by not obeying him**! You must realize that those who
behave as evil people do are hostile to God. So if that is how you decide to live, then you will
be choosing to be hostile to God. 5 You must realize that God has purposely told us about this
in the Scriptures. There he teaches us that the Spirit he placed in us yearns for us to live our
lives in ways that please him. 6 If we are living in ways that do not please God, he is very kind
to us. **He will help us live differently if we humbly admit that we have been doing wrong.** That is
why this teaching is in the Bible: “God does not help those who are proud, but he does help
those who are humble.”

7 So choose humbly to obey God. Firmly determine not to give in to the devil's
temptations. This will make the devil give up on trying to tempt you. 8 Be honest and open
with God. If you do, he will welcome you into his presence. You who are sinners, turn away
from doing what is wrong and do only what is right. You who cannot decide whether you will
commit yourselves to God, stop thinking wrong thoughts and think only right thoughts.
9 Show sorrow and be sad and weep **because of the wrong things that you have done**. You have
been enjoying yourselves, but you should be serious **and realize how much you need to change**.
10 Humbly show the Lord how sorry you are for your sins. If you do that, he will honor you.

11 My fellow believers, stop accusing one another of doing wrong. Anyone who accuses
and condemns a fellow believer is really accusing and condemning God's commandment **that
we should love one another**. But if you speak against that commandment, you are not obeying it.
Instead, you are acting like a judge who condemns it. 12 The only one who can judge people
according to the law is the one who gave the law. That is God, who is able not just to condemn
people **for breaking the law** but also to pardon them **even though they have broken the law**. You
certainly are not entitled to take God's place and judge others.

13 Some of you are **arrogantly** saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go to a certain city. We
will spend a year there and we will buy and sell things and earn a lot of money." Now you
listen to me! 14 You should not talk like that, because you do not know what will happen
tomorrow. In fact, you do not even know how long you will live! After all, your life is short,
like a mist that is visible briefly but then vanishes. 15 Instead **of what you are saying,** you
should say, "If the Lord is willing, we will still be alive and we will be able to do one thing or
another." 16 But what you are doing is bragging about all the things you plan to do. That kind
of bragging is sinful.

17 So if anyone does not do something even though he knows it is the right thing that he
should do, he has committed a sin.

5 1 Now I have something to say to you rich people **who say you believe in Jesus**. Listen to
me! You should weep and wail loudly because you are going to experience terrible troubles!
2 Your wealth is worthless, as though it were rotten. Your fine clothes are worthless, as though
moths had ruined them. 3 Your gold and silver are worthless, as though they were corroded.

When God judges you, this worthless wealth of yours will be evidence that you are guilty of being greedy. Just as rust and fire destroy things, God will severely punish you. You should not have been trying to get richer and richer knowing that Jesus was going to return. When he returns, your riches will be worthless. **4** Think about what you have done. You did not pay the wages you promised to the workers who harvested your fields. These unpaid wages show how unfair you were to these workers. They are crying out to God because of the way you have treated them. The Lord is a God of great power, and he is listening to their loud cries and he will punish you for what you have done. **5** You have bought all the luxuries you wanted for yourselves. Just as cattle fatten themselves, not realizing that they will be slaughtered, you have lived just to enjoy things, not realizing that God will severely punish you. **6** You have arranged for others to condemn honest people. You have arranged for others to kill people who had not done anything wrong. They were not able to defend themselves against you. But God will judge and punish you for doing all these things.

7 So, my fellow believers, even though rich people cause you to suffer, be patient until Jesus the Messiah comes back. Remember that when farmers plant a field, they have to wait for their valuable crops to grow. They have to wait patiently for the rain that comes at the planting season and for more rain that comes just before the harvest season. This rain is necessary for the crops to grow and mature so that the farmers can harvest them. **8** Similarly, you also should wait patiently and trust Jesus the Messiah firmly, because he is coming back soon and he will judge all people fairly. **9** My fellow believers, do not grumble about each other. That way the Lord Jesus will not have to punish you. He is the one who will judge us, and he will come back soon to do that. **10** My fellow believers, as an example of how to be patient, consider the prophets whom the Lord God sent long ago to speak his messages. Although people caused them to suffer much, they endured it patiently. **11** Consider how, when people are able to endure suffering patiently and faithfully, we say that God has blessed them. One example of this is the man named Job. You know about him from the Scriptures. You know that he suffered many things patiently. You also know that God planned to do good things through what Job suffered. And from that you can tell that God is very caring and kind.

12 Now this, my fellow believers, is something very important for you to realize. You must never take an oath by calling on heaven or the earth or anything else to guarantee a promise that you make. All you need to say is "Yes" or "No." God will judge you if you go beyond that and make an oath but then do not keep your promise.

13 Any one of you who is experiencing trouble should pray **that God would help him**.
Whoever is happy should sing songs of praise **to God**. **14** Any one of you who is sick should
call the leaders of the congregation to come and pray for him **to recover**. They should put olive
oil on him **to help him recover** and, with the Lord's authority, pray. **15** When these leaders pray
to God in faith, God will answer that prayer and heal the person who is sick. The Lord will
restore his health. If that person has sinned, God will forgive him **for those sins**. **16** Because the
Lord is able to heal the sick and to forgive sins, admit to each other the sinful things you have
done and pray for each other. Then God will heal you. If people who are right with God pray,
God will answer their prayers in powerful ways. **17** The prophet Elijah was an ordinary person
like us. But when he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, the land **of Israel** had no rain for
three and a half years. **18** Then Elijah prayed again**, asking God to send rain**, and God made it
rain and plants grew and produced crops again.

19 My fellow believers, if one of you stops obeying the true message from God, then
another one of you should persuade that person to do once again what God has told us to do.
20 I want anyone who helps a sinner to repent to know that because of what he has done, God
will save the sinner from spiritual death and will forgive his many sins.

1 Peter

1 **1** I am Peter, whom Jesus the Messiah sent to represent him. I am writing this letter to you whom God has chosen to belong to himself. I am writing to you who are temporarily living in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, far away from your true home in heaven. **2** God our Father chose you according to what he had already decided. He did this by his Spirit, setting you apart in order that you may obey him and in order that the death of Jesus the Messiah may make you members of a covenant with God. I pray that God will increase his kind acts toward you and make you more peaceful.

3 Praise God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! Because he is very merciful to us, he has caused us to experience the new birth by bringing Jesus the Messiah back to life after he had died. God did this in order that we would have hope that will never disappoint us, **4** that is, in order that we might inherit what cannot perish, be defiled, or fade, which is what God has kept for us in heaven. **5** God's power is guarding you by means of your trust in Jesus. He is guarding you in order to reveal your salvation at the final time when Jesus returns to judge everyone. **6** You rejoice a lot because of what will happen then, even though now for a short time many different hardships must grieve you. **7** These hardships happen in order to prove that you really trust in Jesus. That trust is more valuable to God than gold, which someone can destroy even though someone has tested it by passing it through fire. Because you trust in Jesus, God will praise, glorify, and honor you when Jesus the Messiah returns and reveals himself. **8** You love Jesus, although you have not seen him. Although you do not see him now, you trust him and rejoice with joy that you can hardly express, **9** because you are experiencing the result of trusting him: God is saving you from the guilt of your sins.

10 Long ago prophets investigated very carefully about God saving you. They spoke what God told them about God graciously saving you. **11** They were trying to find out to whom the Spirit of the Messiah that was in them was referring to, and to what time the Spirit was referring to. The Spirit was referring to these things when he told them beforehand that the Messiah would suffer and that glorious things would happen afterwards. **12** God told these

prophets that it was not for their own benefit that he was revealing these things to them, but that it was for your benefit. Those people who preached the good news to you now have declared these things to you by the Holy Spirit, whom God sent from heaven, **enabling them to do that**. Angels would like to know more about what these people declared to you.

13 As a result of all these things, prepare your minds for action. Be alert. Be completely confident that God will graciously save you when Jesus the Messiah **returns and** reveals himself. **14** Because you obey God like children ought to obey their fathers, do not allow yourself to be controlled by the **sinful** desires you used to have when you did not know **the truth about God**. **15** Instead, just like God, the one who chose you **to belong to him**, is holy, act in a holy manner when you do anything. **16** Be holy, because Moses wrote **in the scriptures that God said**, "Be holy, because I am holy."

17 God is the one who judges what each person does, and he judges without bias. Since you call him "Father," behave in a way that shows you fear him while you are temporarily living **far away from your true home in heaven**. **18** **Behave in that way** because you know that **God paid to free you** from behaving foolishly, as your ancestors taught you **to behave**. God did not pay to free you with things like silver or gold that will not last forever. **19** Instead, **God paid for you to be free** by the Messiah's priceless death **on the cross**. **That death was** like **the deaths** of the entirely perfect lambs **that the Jewish priests sacrificed**. **20** God chose him to do this before he created the world. But **it was now,** in this last time period, that God revealed him to you. **21** Because of what the Messiah has done, you are trusting in God. He caused the Messiah to become alive again after he had died and has shown how great he is. As a result, you are trusting God and expecting **him to do great things**.

22 Because you have made yourselves pure by obeying the true teachings **of Jesus** in order to genuinely love other believers, love each other sincerely and fervently. **23** **Do this** because God has caused you to experience the new birth. **You did not experience this new birth** by means of something that will perish. Rather, **you experienced it** by means of something that will never perish: the message **about Jesus** that came from God and truly lasts forever. **24** **We know that this is true** because, **as the prophet Isaiah wrote,**

> "All people are like grass, and everything that is great about people is like flowers in the grass.

Just as grass dies and flowers whither, **so do people die and what is great about them only lasts for a short time**,

25 but God's message lasts forever."

This message **that lasts forever** is the good news **about the Messiah** that we have declared to you.

2 **1** Because **these things are true**, do not act wickedly or deceive others in any way. Do not be hypocrites, and do not envy others. Do not speak evil things falsely about anyone. **2** Just as newborn babies strongly desire their mothers' pure milk, so you should strongly desire to learn true things about God so that by **learning** them you may become spiritually mature. **You must do this** until the time when God saves you completely **from this sinful world**. **3** **You must do this** because you have experienced that the Lord acts very kindly **toward you**.

4 You have come to the Lord Jesus. **He is like** a stone **that is part of a building, but he is** alive. Although people rejected him, God chose him and greatly values him. **5** And you are like stones that are alive. **Like men build houses with stones,** God is joining you together like a building in which his Spirit dwells. **He is also making you** be like priests whom he has set apart in order to do spiritual acts, pleasing to God, by means of Jesus the Messiah. **6** What **Isaiah** wrote **that God had said** in Scripture shows us that this is true: "Pay attention! I am placing in Jerusalem someone who is like the most important stone in the building. I have chosen him. He is very valuable. And anyone who trusts in him will surely never be humiliated."

7 Therefore, **God** will honor you who believe in Jesus. However, those who refuse to believe in him **are like the builders that someone wrote about in the Psalms**: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building."

8 **Isaiah** also **wrote in the Scriptures that the Messiah would be like**

"a stone that causes people to stumble,
and a rock that offends people."

Just as people become injured because they trip over a rock,

people become offended because they disobey God's message;

that is what God determined would happen to them.

9 In contrast **to them**, you **believers** are people whom God has chosen **for himself**. **You are** like a group of priests **who worship God** and rule **with him**. **You are** a people group that God has set apart **for himself**. **You are** a people who belong to God so that you might declare the praiseworthy things he has done. He has called you out of your former manner of living, when you were sinful and ignorant about God, and he has made you understand the wonderful true things about himself. **10** **What Hosea wrote is true about you** who used to be "no people group at all," but now are "God's people group." At one time "God had not acted mercifully toward you," but now "he has acted mercifully toward you."

11 Fellow believers whom I love, you are like foreigners **whose real home is in heaven**. So I urge you not to do the things that your sinful human natures want to do. Those desires will destroy you. **12** Behave well among those who do not know God in order that, concerning the things you are doing, which they falsely say are evil, they will see that you are **actually** doing good things and they will honor God when he comes to judge everyone.

13 In order to honor the Lord Jesus, obey everyone who has power **to govern people**. This includes the king, because he has the greatest **human** power. **14** It also includes governors, because the king has sent them to punish those who do evil things and to praise those who do good things. **15** **Obey those who govern people,** because this is what God wants: **He wants you** to do good things in order to stop fools **who do not know God** from being able to ignorantly say that you have done evil things. **16** **Obey those who govern people** as people who are free to do so voluntarily, but do not try to use your status as free people to hide evil deeds. Instead, **obey** as those who serve God should. **17** Be respectful to everyone. Love all **your** fellow believers. Revere God. Be respectful to the king.

18 You household slaves **who are believers**, submit to your masters with a completely reverent attitude. **Do this** not only to those **masters** who act very kindly toward you but also to those who act unjustly toward you. **19** **Submit to your masters,** because this is something that God prefers—if someone endures hardships and suffers undeservedly because that person is aware of who God is **and what he wants**. **20** **Submit to your masters,** because there is certainly no honor for you if you endure when someone beats you because you have sinned. However, this is something that God favors: if you endure when you suffer even though you did what is

good. **21** God favors this because he has called you to suffer while doing what is good. He has called you to this because the Messiah also suffered for your sake in order to be an example for you with the purpose that you would imitate what he did.

> **22** "He never sinned.
>
> And he never said anything to deceive people."
>
> **23** When people insulted him, he never insulted them in return.
>
> When he suffered, he never threatened those who caused him to suffer.
>
> Instead, he trusted God, who always judges rightly, to prove that he was innocent.
>
> **24** The Messiah himself was punished for our sins in his body when he died on the cross with the purpose that we would live rightly because we are no longer controlled by sin.

God has healed you because people wounded the Messiah. **25** God healed you because you were alienated from God like sheep that had become lost, but now God has brought you back to Jesus, who cares for you and watches over you as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

3 **1** In a similar way, you women who are believers, submit to your husbands. Do this in order that you may persuade any husbands who do not believe the message about the Messiah to become believers without you saying anything to them. **2** They will believe in the Messiah because they see that you behave sincerely and act reverently toward them. **3** Do not make the outside of your bodies beautiful by having fancy hairstyles or by wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes. **4** Instead, make your unseen mind beautiful in a way that will never fade. I mean, have a humble and peaceful attitude. This is something that God values very much. **5** Do this because this is the way that the women who lived holy lives long ago made themselves beautiful. They trusted in God and submitted to their husbands. **6** Sarah, for example, obeyed her husband Abraham and called him her master. God will consider you to be her daughters if you do good deeds and are not afraid of anything terrible happening to you.

7 You men who are believers, in a similar way, dwell together with your wives in an understanding manner. Treat them as you would treat someone who is weaker than you are. Honor them as those who will also receive God's gracious gift with you, which is eternal life. Do this so that nothing will hinder you from praying.

8 To end this part of my letter, I say to all of you, have the same mindset among yourselves. Be sympathetic toward each other. Love each other as fellow believers. Act compassionately toward each other. Be humble. **9** When people do evil things to you or insult you, do not do the same to them. Instead, bless them, because that is what God has chosen you to do in order that he may bless you. **10** We know that this is true because, as David wrote,

> "As for those who truly want to enjoy good lives,
> they must not say evil things or speak deceitful things.
> **11** They must also refuse to do evil, and do what is good instead.
> They must diligently strive to have peaceful relationships with other people.
> **12** They must do these things, because the Lord watches over righteous people.
> He listens and responds to the prayers of righteous people,
> but he opposes people who do evil."

13 It is unlikely that anyone will harm you if you are eager to do what is good. **14** However, even if you suffer because you did what was right, God will bless you. "Do not be afraid of or troubled by the things that other people fear." **15** Instead, acknowledge in your minds that the Lord Messiah is holy. Always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to tell them about what you are confidently expecting God to do for you. **16** But answer them humbly and reverently, while not doing any wicked thing, in order that God may shame those who despise the good things you do as people united with the Messiah. God will shame them regarding the very things they are speaking falsely against you. **17** Do these things because, if God wants you to suffer, it is better for you to suffer because you did what is good than to suffer because you did what is evil. **18** This is true because the Messiah also suffered. He suffered one time for the sake of other people's sins. He was a righteous person who died for the benefit of unrighteous people. He died in order to enable you to be with God. Although people killed him, God's Spirit caused him to become alive again. **19** The Spirit also enabled him to go and announce God's victory to the evil spirits whom God had imprisoned. **20** Those evil spirits disobeyed God long ago, during the lifetime of Noah. When Noah was building a big boat, God waited patiently to see if people would stop doing what is evil. Only a few people were saved in that boat. Specifically, God brought only eight people safely through the waters of the flood. **21** That water is a symbol that represents the baptism which now saves you. This baptism does

not wash dirt off of your bodies. Instead, it shows that we are asking God to assure us that he has forgiven our sins. This baptism saves you by means of God having caused Jesus the Messiah to become alive again. 22 After God caused every evil and powerful spirit to submit to him, the Messiah went to heaven, where he is at the place of highest honor next to God.

4 1 Therefore, because the Messiah physically suffered, prepare yourselves to suffer as Christians by thinking about suffering the way that Jesus thought about suffering. Do this because those who physically suffer are no longer involved in sin 2 in order that they would not do the things that sinful people want to do during the rest of their lives. Instead, they live to do the things that God wants them to do. 3 I say that to you because you have already used too much of your lifetime doing what the people who do not know God like to do. Like them, you committed sexually immoral and lustful acts, got drunk, participated in immoral parties and drinking parties, and worshiped idols, which God has forbidden. 4 Regarding those things, people who do not know God are surprised that you do not join with them anymore when they do these recklessly immoral things. As a result, they say bad things about you. 5 One day these people will have to admit to God everything that they have done. He is the one who will judge all people. 6 This is the reason why people preached the good news about Jesus to believers who are now dead: in order that those believers who, although people judged them according to human standards during their lifetimes, by means of the Holy Spirit now live forever according to God's standards. 7 All things on this earth will soon end. So think sensibly and clearly in order to pray well. 8 Most important of all, love each other sincerely, because if you love others, you will forgive them for many sins that they may commit against you. 9 Provide food and a place to sleep for fellow Christians who come to you, and do it cheerfully. 10 Serve your fellow believers with the gifts that God has given you. Manage well the various gifts that God has kindly given you. 11 Those who speak should speak as if they were speaking words that God has spoken. Those who serve others should serve them with the strength that God gives them. Do so in order to glorify God by doing everything that Jesus the Messiah enables you to do. I pray that everyone will see how glorious and powerful he is forever. May it be so!
12 Fellow believers whom I love, do not be surprised by the painful things you are experiencing. Those things are testing you as people test metal by putting it into a fire. Do not think that something unusual is happening to you. 13 Instead, rejoice to the degree that you are suffering the same kinds of things that the Messiah suffered. Rejoice when you suffer, in order

that you may also be very glad when the Messiah returns and shows everyone how glorious he is. **14** If other people insult you because you believe in the Messiah, God has blessed you, because **your suffering** shows that the Spirit of God, the Spirit who reveals how great God is, dwells within you. **15** Make sure that you do not suffer because you murdered anyone or stole anything or did some other kind of evil thing or because you interfered in someone else's affairs. **16** But do not be ashamed if you suffer because you are a Christian. Instead, praise God that you have the name "Christian." **17** **I say this** because it is now time for God to begin judging people, and first he will judge those who belong to him. Since **he will judge** us believers first, think about what **terrible things** will finally happen to those who do not obey the good news that comes from him! **18** **Solomon** also **wrote in the Scriptures**,

> "If righteous people must suffer many difficult trials before going to heaven,
> how much more will the ungodly and sinful people surely suffer!"

19 Therefore, those who are suffering because God wants **them to suffer** should trust God with their lives while continuing to do what is good. God is the one who created them, and he always does what he promises to do.

5 **1** Now I**, Peter,** urge those among you who are elders **who lead the assemblies of believers**; **I am also** an elder. I personally witnessed the Messiah suffer, and I will share in his glorious nature that God will soon reveal. **2** **You elders,** take care of the believers with you as if you were shepherds who take care of their flocks of sheep. **Take care of them** not because you must do it, but because you really want to, as God desires. Do not **do this** in a greedy manner **to get money for doing it**, but do it enthusiastically. **3** Do not act like domineering bosses over the people whom God has assigned to you. Instead, be **good** examples to those believers **by how you conduct your lives**. **4** **If you do those things,** then when Jesus, who is like our ruling shepherd, appears, he will give each of you **leaders** a reward. **That reward will be** glorious **and will** last forever.

5 In a similar way, you young men, obey the elders **who lead the assemblies of believers**. Now all of you **believers** should act humbly toward each other because **what Solomon wrote in the Scriptures is true:** "God opposes proud people, but he acts kindly toward humble people."

6 Since that is true, humble yourselves before God, who has the power **to save and to punish people,** in order that he may honor you at the proper time. **7** Trust God to take care of everything that worries you because he cares about you.

8 Think clearly and alertly, **because** the devil is your enemy, and he is going around, looking for people to destroy. He is like a lion that roars as it searches for people to kill and eat. **9** Resist the devil by continuing to firmly trust **in the Messiah and his message**. **Do this** because you know that your fellow believers all over the world are suffering in similar ways. **10** But after you have suffered for a brief time, the God who acts kindly **toward you** in every way will himself restore **what you have lost** and will completely strengthen you in every way. God is the one who chose you to experience his glorious presence in heaven forever as you are joined to the Messiah. **11** I pray that he will rule powerfully forever. May it be so!

12 Silas has written this letter for me **as I have dictated it to him**. I consider him to be a faithful fellow believer. I have written this short letter to you in order to encourage you and to declare to you that what I have written is about the true and gracious message from God. Continue to firmly believe this message!

13 In **this city that we call** "Babylon," the believers, whom God has chosen **to belong to him** just like he chose you, send their regards to you. Mark, who is like a son to me, also **sends his regards to you**. **14** Affectionately greet each other with a kiss to show that you love each other. I pray that God will continue to make all you who are joined to the Messiah feel peaceful.

2 Peter

1 **1** I, Simon Peter, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am an apostle whom he appointed. I am writing this letter to you whom God has caused to believe in the Messiah just like he caused us apostles to believe in the Messiah. Jesus has done this by his righteous acts. Jesus the Messiah is our God, and he is the one who saves us. **2** I pray that God will increase his kind acts toward you and make you more peaceful because you know God and Jesus, who is our Lord.

3 God has given us everything that we need in order to live a life that honors him. He does this by his power as God. He does this by what we know about him. God is the one who chose us to be his people by his glorious and excellent character. **4** By his glorious and excellent character, God has promised that he will do priceless and great things for us. He has done this so that by believing in what he has promised, you will be able to act like God, and you will no longer suffer the moral corruption that is in the world through the desire to do sinful things.

5 Because God has done all that, do your best to not only believe in the Messiah, but also to do good things. And make sure that you not only do good things, but that you also learn more about God. **6** And make sure that you do not only learn more about God, but that you also control yourself in what you do and say. And make sure that you do not only control yourself in what you do and say, but that you also remain faithful to God in hardship. And make sure that you do not only remain faithful to God in hardship, but that you also honor him. **7** And make sure that you do not only honor God, but that you also show affection to each other as family members. And make sure that you do not only show affection to each other as family members, but that you also love others. **8** Do these things, because if you do all these things more and more, then they will make you productive with respect to your knowing our Lord Jesus the Messiah. **9** Do these things, because a person who does not do these things is not aware that these things are important. This person is like a blind person who cannot see what is around him, or like a nearsighted person who can only see things that are close to him. This person has even forgotten that God has forgiven him for the sinful things he did in the past. **10** Consequently, you fellow believers, make even more effort to make sure that God has chosen you to be his

people. If you do these things I have just told you about, then you will absolutely never become separated from God. **11** This is true because, by your doing thus, God will wholeheartedly allow you to enter into the place where our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah will rule his people forever.

12 Consequently, because these things are so important, I am always prepared to keep on reminding you about these things. I will remind you even though you already know them and are firmly convinced of the true teaching that you now have. **13** Nevertheless, I consider it to be right for me to keep reminding you about these things as long as I am alive. **14** I want to remind you of these things, because I know that I shall die soon. I shall die just like our Lord Jesus the Messiah has made clear to me previously. **15** In addition, I will make every effort by writing these things down to cause you to keep on remembering these things after I have died.

16 I will do this because, when we apostles told you that our Lord Jesus the Messiah is coming back in power some day, we were not basing what we told you on stories that we had cleverly made up. On the contrary, we told you what we saw with our own eyes, the divinely majestic Jesus. **17** I can say we were eyewitnesses because we were there when God the Father honored him and glorified him, when Jesus heard a voice from the majestically glorious God. And the voice said, "This is my Son, whom I love very much. I am very pleased with him." **18** We ourselves also heard this voice of God that came from heaven when we were with Jesus on that sacred mountain. **19** And we have what the prophets wrote previously, which is absolutely reliable. Pay attention to what they wrote, because it is like a lamp that is shining in a dark place that helps people see where they are going. That light will shine until the day of the return of the Messiah dawns and Jesus, the star that appears before the morning, gives your minds greater understanding. **20** Above all, you should know that no prophet could interpret his prophecy by his own imagination. **21** This is true because no one ever prophesied a true prophecy according to what a human wanted. On the contrary, those who spoke prophecies from God did so by the Holy Spirit guiding them.

2 **1** But people who falsely proclaimed messages from God were also amidst the Israelites. In the same way there will also be people who teach false messages amidst you. They will introduce opinions that will result in eternal condemnation. They will even reject their owner, Jesus, who redeemed them. As a result of this, God will soon condemn them for eternity. **2** And

many people will do the same unrestrained immoral acts as these false teachers. Because of these false teachers, unbelievers will speak evil of Christianity. 3 And due to their greedy hearts, these false teachers will make a profit off of you by telling you lies. God condemned them a long time ago, and God will certainly destroy them.

4 This judgment is certain because God did not let the angels who acted sinfully remain unpunished. On the contrary, he threw them into hell where they are chained in darkness. God imprisoned these sinful angels there and is holding them there in order to judge them. 5 And God did not let the people who lived in the world long ago remain unpunished. However, he preserved eight people, including Noah, who was a righteous herald, when he destroyed by a flood the ungodly people who lived in the world at that time. 6 And God condemned the cities called Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed by burning them completely to ashes. This resulted in God making those cities an example of what will happen to people who dishonor God. 7 And God rescued Lot, who was a righteous man. Lot was greatly distressed because of the unrestrained immoral acts of the people who acted lawlessly in Sodom. 8 (When he lived with those wicked people in Sodom, that righteous man Lot distressed himself every day by what he saw and heard. He did so because of the things people did that were against God's law.) 9 Since these things are all true, then you can be sure that the Lord knows how to rescue people who honor him from being tried. And the Lord also knows how to keep those who do unrighteous deeds ready in order to punish them at the time when he judges. 10 And he will punish especially those who keep on doing what their sinful hearts want to do, which are things that make them displeasing to God. These people also scorn divine authority. How bold they are! They do whatever they wish! They are not even afraid to insult God's glorious angels. 11 But God's angels, even though they are much more powerful than these people, do not accuse glorious beings in an insulting manner in front of God! 12 However, these false teachers are like animals that cannot think rationally. According to the way they naturally behave, they were born so that others may capture and destroy them. They say bad things about things they do not even know. God will surely destroy them when it is time for their destruction. 13 These false teachers suffer harm as the proper punishment for their harmful deeds. They are pleased to party in an immoral manner even during the daytime. Like ugly stains on one's clothing, they are disgraceful to your gatherings! They even celebrate their deceptive deeds while eating a meal with you! 14 They constantly want to have immoral sexual relations with every woman they see. They cannot stop sinning. They lure spiritually weak people into sin. As athletes train for

sports, these false teachers train themselves to be greedy. God has cursed them! 15 They refuse to live the way God wants them to. They are acting wickedly. They are imitating what Balaam, the son of Bosor, did long ago. He loved to receive money as payment for wicked deeds.
16 However, God rebuked him for his wicked deed against Israel. And even though donkeys do not speak, God used Balaam's donkey to speak to him with a human voice and stop his foolish action.

17 These false teachers are useless, like springs that do not give water. They are like clouds that the storm pushes away before they can give rain. God has reserved the darkness of hell for them. 18 This is true because they persuade people to sin who have recently become believers and stopped doing what wicked unbelievers do. These false teachers do this by speaking proud words that are not worth anything. They persuade these people to sin by doing whatever their sinful natures want to do. 19 They also do this by telling their listeners that they are free to do whatever they want while, at the same time, they themselves are controlled by their sinful desires that will destroy them. This is true because the thing that overpowers a person's will takes control of that person. 20 And if they have stopped doing the things that defile sinful human society by knowing the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah, but those defiling things began to control them again, then their situation is worse now than it was at first. 21 This is because it would have been better for them if they had never learned how to live in the way that pleases God than to learn this way and reject God's holy commands that the apostles taught them. 22 This is a true proverb that describes what has happened to these false teachers: "They are like dogs that return to eat their own vomit," and, "They are like pigs that have washed themselves and then roll again in the mud."

3 1 Fellow believers whom I love, this letter that I am now writing to you is the second letter that I have written to you. I have written both of these letters to you to remind you of the things that your sincere minds already know. 2 I have written these letters in order to remind you of the prophecies that the holy prophets spoke a long time ago. I also want you to remember what the one who rules over us and saves us has commanded you through the teaching of the apostles whom we sent to you.

3 It is important for you to understand that people who mock will come and mock the return of Jesus during the time shortly before Jesus returns. Those people will do whatever they

want to do. 4 These mockers will say, “Jesus’ promise to return is not true! We know this because since Israel’s ancestors died, everything has remained the same. It has been the same way since God created everything!” 5 They will say this because they deliberately ignore that God caused the heavens to exist a long time ago by commanding it to be so, and he caused the earth to come out from water and up through water by commanding it to be so. 6 And God, by his command and by water, destroyed the world that existed at that time. He did so by flooding the earth with water. 7 However, God, by the same command, has set apart the heavens and the earth that exist now for fire. God is keeping them for the time when he will judge and destroy people who act wickedly. 8 Fellow believers whom I love, do not ignore this one truth: from God’s perspective a short period of time is no different from a long period of time! 9 The Lord is not acting slowly to fulfill his promise of Jesus’ return. Some people think that this is so. On the contrary, God is being patient with you, because he does not want any of you to be punished eternally. Rather, he wants everyone to repent. 10 In contrast to what those mockers say, the time when the Lord returns will come unexpectedly. At that time there will be a great roaring sound and the heavens will cease to exist. God will also destroy the basic elements of nature by fire. Then God will reveal the earth and everything that has been done in it.

11 Since God will destroy all these things I have just mentioned in the way I have described, you must certainly behave in a holy manner and do what pleases God. 12 Do these things while expecting and trying to speed up the time of Jesus’ return. On account of that day, God will destroy the heavens with fire and melt the basic elements of nature with heat. 13 Although all those events will happen, we are expecting the new heavens and new earth that God has promised to create. Everyone will be righteous in that new universe.

14 Because this is true, fellow believers whom I love, while you are waiting for these things to happen, do your best to make sure that Jesus will see that you are not living sinfully and that you are at peace with God. 15 And think about this: Our Lord Jesus is patient so that more people can be saved. Paul, a fellow believer whom we love, has also said this when he wrote to you. He wrote using the wisdom that God gave him. 16 In all the letters that Paul wrote, he also writes about these things that I have just mentioned. In his letters are also some teachings that are difficult to understand. People who lack knowledge and stability misinterpret those difficult teachings, as well as the rest of the scriptures. God will punish them as a result.
17 Because all these things are true, fellow believers whom I love, and because you already

know about these things, keep yourselves from ceasing to live faithfully because you let the wrong teaching of those who live like there is no law deceive you into sinning. **18** Rather, live in such a manner that you experience more and more of the kind acts of the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah. And live in such a manner that you know more and more about him.

I pray that everyone will glorify Jesus both at this time and forever. May this truly be so!

1 John

1 [1] I, John, am writing to you about Jesus, the Word of God, the one who gives life. He existed before there was anything else. We apostles listened to him as he taught people. We saw him personally. We looked at him and touched him. So we can testify that he was a real human being. [2] Because he who always lives came here to the earth and we saw him, we are proclaiming him to you clearly. The one who has always existed, who had been with his Father in heaven, came here to us. [3] We want you to share life with us, and so we are proclaiming to you what we saw Jesus do and what we heard Jesus say. If you believe in him, you will share life, as we do, with God our Father and with his Son Jesus the Messiah. [4] I am writing to you about these things so that you will recognize that they are true, and that as a result we will be completely joyful together.

[5] The message that we heard from Jesus and are proclaiming to you is this: God always does what is right, and he never, ever does anything wrong. He is like a pure light in which there is no darkness at all. [6] If we say that we share life with God, but we live in an evil manner, we are lying. We are not living truthfully. It is as though we are living in the dark. [7] But if we live in a pure manner, as God is pure in every way, then we can share life with each other. This is like living in God's pure light. Then God forgives all of our sin and accepts us because his Son Jesus died for us. [8] If we say that we do not commit sin, we are fooling ourselves. We are refusing to believe the true things that God says about us. [9] But God always does what he says he will do, and what he does is always right. So if we admit to him that we have sinned and reject that sin, he will forgive us for our sins and he will free us from the guilt of everything that we have done wrong. [10] Because God says that everyone has sinned, if we say that we have not sinned, we are speaking as if God were a liar! We are rejecting what God has said about us!

2 [1] You are as dear to me as though you were my own children. Therefore, I am writing this to you to keep you from sinning. But if any of you does sin, remember that Jesus the Messiah,

the righteous one, pleads with the Father and asks him to forgive us. 2 Jesus is the one who sacrificed his life for us so that God could forgive our sins. And this is true not just of our sins, but of all the sins that all people everywhere have committed!

3 When we obey what God commands us to do, then we can be sure that we truly know God. 4 If someone says, "I know God well," but that person does not obey what God has commanded, then he is a liar. He is not living according to God's true message. 5 But if someone obeys what God has commanded, that person loves God in every way. This is how we can be sure that we are living closely with God: 6 If anyone says that he is living closely with God, then he should conduct his life as Jesus did when he was here on earth.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing this to tell you to do something new. Instead, I am writing this to tell you to do something that you have known that you should do since you first believed in Jesus. This is part of the message that Jesus gave to us and that we have already told to you. 8 However, if we think about this in another way, I am telling you to do something new. It is new because the way that the Messiah lived was new, and the way that you are living is new. That is because you are ceasing to do evil, and you are doing good more and more. It is as though you have come out of a dark place and have begun to live in the light that is from God. 9 Someone might say that he is living in a good way, just as God wants him to do. That would be like living in light from God. But if he hates any of his fellow believers, then he is still living in a bad way, doing what God does not want, like a person who lives in darkness. 10 But if someone loves his fellow believers, then he is truly living well, like a person who is living in light from God. He will not have a reason to do anything evil as he would have if he hated a fellow believer. This is like a person in daylight who has no reason to trip over anything. 11 But anyone who hates a fellow believer is living in a completely wrong way. He does not understand how he should live, because the wrong things that he is doing are keeping him from understanding God's way. It is as though he is walking in darkness and cannot see where to go.

12 I am writing to you, whom I love as though you were my own children, because God has forgiven your sins because of what Jesus has done for you. 13 I am writing to you who have been believers longer than the others. I am writing to you because you are living closely with Jesus, the person who has always been alive. I am writing to you newer, but steadfast, believers because Satan, that evil being, has tried to tempt you to do wrong, but you have

successfully resisted him. **14** I have written to you whom I love as though you were my own little children because you have a close relationship with God the Father. I have written to you who have been believers longer than the others because you have a close relationship with **Jesus,** the person who has always been alive. I have written to you newer, but steadfast, believers because you are spiritually strong. I have also written to you because you continue to obey what God commands and because you have successfully resisted **Satan,** that evil being, when he tried to tempt you to do wrong.

15 Do not desire to be like people who do not honor God. Do not desire the things that they want to have. If anyone desires to be like those people, **he is proving that** he does not love God the Father. **16** **I say that such a person does not love God the Father** because the way that ungodly people live is not the way that God our Father teaches us to live. They want to fulfill their physical desires. They want to get for themselves the things that they see. They boast about all of the things that they own. All of these things come from the selfish and ungodly way of thinking. **17** The people who do not honor God will disappear, along with all of the things that they desire. But the people who do what God wants them to do will live forever!

18 You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, **I want you to know that** this is the time just before Jesus returns to earth. You have already heard that a person is coming who will strongly oppose the Messiah. In fact, many people like that, who are against the true Messiah, are already here. Because of this, we know that it is that time. **19** These people refused to remain in our congregations. However, they never really belonged with us in the first place. After all, if they had belonged with us, they would not have left us. But **when they left us,** then we clearly saw that none of them had actually joined with us. **20** But as for you, the Holy Messiah has given you his Spirit. As a result, you all know **what is true**. **21** I am not writing this letter to you because you do not know the true things **that God has told us**, but because you do know them. You also know enough to recognize and reject every lie that is not one of the true things **that God has told us**. **22** The worst liars are the ones who deny that Jesus is the Messiah. All who do that are against the Messiah. They are refusing to believe both in God the Father and in Jesus his Son. **23** Those who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are in no way joined with God the Father. But those who acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are also joined with God the Father. **24** Here is what you must do**, unlike those people who deny Jesus**. You must continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you

first heard. If you continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you first heard, then you will continue to share life with Jesus the Son and God the Father. 25 And what Jesus promised us is that God will enable us to live forever!

26 I am writing this letter to you to warn you about people who want to deceive you **about Jesus**. 27 Here is what you should do **about those people who are trying to deceive you**. God's Spirit, whom you received from Jesus, continues to live in you. So you do not need anyone else to be your teacher. God's Spirit is teaching you everything **that you need to know**. He always teaches the truth and never says anything that is false. So continue to live in the way that he has taught you and continue to live closely with Jesus.

28 Now, my dear ones, **I urge you to** continue to live closely with Jesus. That way, when he comes back again, we will be confident **that he will accept us**. **If we do that,** we will not be ashamed to stand before him when he returns. 29 You know that God always does what is right. Because of that, you also know that all those who continue doing what is right are the ones who have become God's spiritual children.

3 1 Think about how much God our Father loves us! He says that we are his children. In a spiritual sense, this is completely true. That is why people who are unbelievers do not understand us. It is because they have not understood who God is**, and we are like him just as children are like their parents**. 2 Dear friends, at present we are God's spiritual children. He has not yet shown us what we will be **in the future**. **However,** we know that when Jesus comes back again, we will become like him because we will see him as he truly is. 3 So all those who confidently expect to see Jesus as he truly is make themselves free from sin because Jesus himself is free from sin. 4 But everyone who continues to sin is refusing to obey God's laws, because that is what sinning is; it is refusing to obey God's laws. 5 You know that Jesus came in order to make us free from our sins. **You know** also **that** he himself never sinned. 6 Those who share life with Jesus are the ones who do not continue sinning. But all those who continue to sin are the ones who have not understood who Jesus is and they do not really know him. 7 So I urge you who are very dear to me not to let anyone deceive you **by telling you that it is all right to sin**. If you continue doing what is right, that will please God, just as Jesus always does what pleases God. 8 But anyone who continues to sin is behaving like the devil, because the devil has always been sinning, ever since the world began. The very reason that God's Son

became a human being was to undo this work of the devil **that kept people continually sinning**.
9 People do not continue sinning if they have become spiritual children of God because God has made them to be like him. They cannot continually sin, because they are God's spiritual children. **10** People who belong to God are clearly different from people who belong to the devil. Those who do not do what is right do not belong to God. Those who do not love their fellow believers also do not belong to God.

11 **You should recognize this because** the message that you heard when you first believed in Jesus is that we should love each other. **12** We should not hate others as **Adam's son** Cain did. He belonged to **Satan,** that evil being. Cain murdered his **younger** brother **Abel**. I will tell you why he did that. It was because Cain behaved in an evil way, and **he hated his younger brother because** his younger brother behaved in the right way. **13** Therefore, my fellow believers, you should not be amazed when unbelievers hate you. **14** We love our fellow believers, and this assures us that God has made us spiritually alive. But if someone does not love **other believers**, then that person is still spiritually dead. **15** Anyone who hates one of his fellow believers is doing something just as bad as murdering him. And you know that someone who murders another person is not living in the new way that God enables us to live. **16** Jesus taught us how to truly love each other when he willingly died for us. For our part, we should also be willing to do anything for our fellow believers, even die for them. **17** Many of us have the things that are necessary for life in this world. But suppose that we become aware that a fellow believer does not have what he needs. Suppose also that we refuse to provide for him. Then we are not loving him the way that God taught us to love **people**. **18** You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, let us not **merely** say that we love **each other**. Let us love **each other** genuinely by helping **each other**.

19-20 By doing that, we can know that we belong to God, who is the source of everything that is true. When we are in God's presence, we may feel that we do not belong to God because of our sins. When that happens, we can reassure ourselves that we truly do belong to him. This is because God is more trustworthy than our feelings and he knows everything about us**, including that we have trusted in him**. **21** Dear friends, when we feel that God does not condemn us **for having sinned**, then we can pray confidently to God. **22** We find that when we pray confidently to God and ask for something, he gives it to us. **We pray confidently like this** because **as people who belong to him,** we do what he commands us to do, and we do what

pleases him. 23 I will tell you what God commands us to do. We must trust in his Son, Jesus the Messiah. We must also love each other just as Jesus commanded us to do. 24 The people who do what God commands share life with God, and God shares life with them. I will tell you how we can be sure that God is sharing life with us. We can be sure of that because we have God's Spirit, whom he gave to us.

4 1 Dear friends, there are many people who have a false message, and they are going around teaching it to others. So do not trust every teacher. Instead, think carefully about what each teacher says and decide whether it came from God's Spirit or from a different spirit. 2 I will tell you how to know if someone is teaching truth that comes from the Spirit of God or if he is not. Those who affirm that Jesus the Messiah came from God and became a human like us are teaching a message that is from God. 3 But those who do not affirm that Jesus became a real human being are not teaching a message from God. They are teachers who oppose the Messiah. You have heard that people like that will be coming among us. Even now they are already here.

4 As for you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, you belong to God, and you have rejected what those people teach. You have done this because God, who enables you to do what he wants, is more powerful than the devil, who motivates everyone who does not honor God. 5 As for those people who are teaching what is false, they think and live in ways that do not honor God. That is why what they say also does not honor God, and that is why other people who do not honor God believe what they say. 6 As for us, God has sent us. Whoever truly knows God believes and obeys what we teach. Whoever does not belong to God does not believe or obey what we teach. By observing who believes us and who does not, we are able to distinguish between people who teach true messages from God's Spirit and people who teach false messages that are from the devil.

7 Dear friends, we must love each other. This is what God wants for us, and it is because he loves us that we can love others. Those who love their fellow believers have become God's spiritual children and know God well. 8 God's character is to love people. So whoever does not love others does not truly know God. 9 I will tell you how God has shown us that he loves us. He sent his only Son to this earth so that his Son would enable us to live eternally because of what he did for us. 10 I will tell you what loving someone really means. Our efforts to love

God do not define what it means to love someone. No, God himself did that by loving us so much that he sent his Son to offer himself as a sacrifice in our place. When Jesus did that, God could forgive the sins of people who trust in Jesus instead of punishing them. 11 Dear friends, since God loves us like that, we certainly ought to love each other!

12 No one has ever seen God. Nevertheless, when we love each other, we can see that God is working in us and that he is the one who enables us to love others, just as he intended for us to do. 13 This is how we can be sure that we are sharing life with God and that God is sharing life with us: He has given us his own Spirit. 14 We apostles have seen God's Son Jesus on earth, and we solemnly tell others that the Father sent him to save the people in the world from suffering eternally for their sins. 15 So God continues to share life with those who say the truth about Jesus. They say, "Jesus is the Son of God." And so they continue to share life with God. 16 We have experienced how God loves us and we believe that he loves us. Because God's nature is to love people, those who continue to love others share life with God, and God shares life with them. 17 When we continue to share life with God, then God has achieved his purpose in loving us. As a result, when the time comes for God to judge us, we will be confident that he will not condemn us. This is because we are loving others as we live in this world just as Jesus is. 18 We will not be afraid of God if we truly love him, because those who love God completely cannot be afraid of him. We would be afraid only if we thought that he would punish us. So those who are afraid of God have not completely understood how much he loves them, and they are not loving God completely. 19 We love God and others because God loved us first. 20 People are lying if they say that they love God but they also hate a fellow believer. After all, we can see our fellow believers. But we have not seen God. So those who do not love one of their fellow believers certainly cannot be loving God, because it is much easier to love someone whom you can see than someone whom you cannot see. 21 Keep in mind that this is what God has commanded us: If we love him, we must also love our fellow believers.

5 1 All those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah are spiritually children of God. Now, whoever loves anyone who is a father certainly loves his child also. So if we believe in Jesus, then we love God, and therefore we should also love his spiritual children, our fellow believers.
2 We can be sure that we do truly love God's spiritual children when we love God and do what

he commands us to do. 3 I am saying this because what loving God really means is that we do what he commands us to do. And it is not difficult to do what he commands us to do. 4 Here is the reason why it is not difficult for us to do what God commands. All of us who have become God's spiritual children have been able to refuse to do what unbelievers want us to do. There is one reason why we are stronger than everything that is against God. It is because we trust in Jesus. 5 I will tell you who is stronger than everything that is against God: It is anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

6 Jesus the Messiah is the one who came to earth from God, experiencing both the water of his baptism and the blood of his death on the cross. God showed that he had truly sent Jesus not only when John baptized Jesus in water, but also when Jesus' blood flowed from his body when he died. And God's Spirit declares truthfully that Jesus the Messiah did these things, because the Spirit is completely truthful. 7 So there are three ways by which we know that Jesus is the Messiah who came from God. 8 Those three ways are: what God's Spirit tells us, what happened when John baptized Jesus in water, and what happened when Jesus' blood flowed from his body when he died on the cross. These three things all tell us the same thing, that Jesus came from God. 9 We rely on what people tell us when we have to decide about something. But we can certainly rely much more on what God tells us. So let me tell you what God has told us about who his Son is. 10 First, however, let me say that those who trust in the Son of God already know that what God says about him is true. But those who do not believe what God says are calling him a liar because they have refused to believe what God has testified about his Son. 11 Now this is what God has told us about who his Son is: "I gave you eternal life, and my Son is the one who makes this life possible." 12 Those who share life with God's Son Jesus have begun to live forever with God. Those who do not share life with God's Son have not begun to live forever.

13 Because I want you to know that you will live forever, I have written this letter to you. This is for you who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. 14 I also want you to know that we can be very confident that God wants to do what we ask of him when we pray for what he desires. 15 Since we know that God wants to give us whatever we ask of him, if it is what he desires, then we also know that God is already giving us what we ask of him.

16 For example, suppose someone sees one of his fellow believers sinning in a way that would not separate him from God eternally. Then he should ask **God to restore the one who is sinning**. If he does that, then God will bring that person back into spiritual life with himself. However, I am saying this only about people who are sinning in a way that would not separate them from God eternally. There is sin that causes people to separate from God eternally. I am not saying that you should pray for people who are sinning in that way. **17** Every wrong thing that people do is a sin **against God**, but there are some sins that will not separate a person from God eternally. **18** We know that everyone who has become God's spiritual son or daughter does not continually sin. Instead, those who have God as their spiritual Father are careful to keep themselves **from sinning** so that Satan, that evil being, does not harm them **spiritually**.
19 We know that we belong to God. We also know that Satan, that evil being, is controlling all the people who are unbelievers. **20** We also know that the Son of God has come among us and has made it possible for us to understand **what is true**. He did this so that we can truly know the genuine God. And we are sharing life with the genuine God, **that is,** with his Son, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is truly God, and he is the one who gives us **this new,** eternal life.

21 I say this to you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children: "Be careful that you never give yourselves to anything that is a false god."

2 John

1 **1** **I am John,** the elder. **I am writing this letter** to you, the congregation **of people** that God has chosen **to belong to him**. I sincerely love all of you believers. Not only do I myself love you, but all those who know and accept the true message **that Jesus taught** also love you. **2** **We love you** because we have all accepted God's true message. This true message has become a part of us and will be with us forever. **3** God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, the Father's Son, will **continue to** act kindly and mercifully toward us and will make us peaceful. **They will do this because** they are truthful and they love **us**.

4 I have learned that some of the believers from your congregation are living according to the true message **that God has taught us**. That made me very happy. This is just what our Father commanded us to do.

5 And now, dear congregation, I ask you **to do what God commanded:** that we should love each other. I am not writing this to you as a new thing that God has commanded **us to do**. Instead, we have known this command to love each other from when we first believed in the Messiah. **6** This is what it means to love **God and each other**. We should obey what God commands us to do. This is what God commands you, **to love each other,** so you need to do it. You have heard this from when you first believed in the Messiah.

7 I say this because there are many people in this world who travel around, deceiving people. These deceptive people refuse to say that Jesus the Messiah was a man with a human body. This **teaching** comes from the **original** deceiver, the one who opposes the Messiah. **8** Be careful so that you do not **let those teachers deceive you! If you let them deceive you, you will** lose everything that we have worked for. So be careful to make sure that you receive the complete benefit! **9** Those who do not continue to believe and teach the things that the Messiah taught, but instead believe and teach other things, do not belong to God. But those who continue to believe and teach what the Messiah taught do belong to both **God,** our Father, and to **Jesus,** his Son. **10** So when any teacher comes to you who does not teach that the Messiah came as a man with a real body, do not welcome him into your homes! Do not even greet him **or wish him well**

in any way, so that you do not encourage him. **11** If you greet these people respectfully, you are helping them to do the evil things that they do.

12 I have much more that I want to say to you. But I have decided not to write them to you in a letter. Instead, I hope to be with you soon and to talk with you personally. Then we will be completely joyful together. **13** Your fellow believers in the congregation here, whom God has also chosen, greet you.

3 John

1 **1** From John the Church Leader. To Gaius, my dear friend, whom I truly love. **2** Dear friend, I am asking God to make everything go well for you and to keep you healthy physically, just as you are healthy in respect to God. **3** I know that you are healthy in respect to God because some fellow believers came here and told me about your truthful way of living. They said that you live according to the true message about Jesus. That makes me very happy. **4** This is what makes me the very happiest—when someone tells me that the people whom I have helped to follow Jesus are living according to the true message from God! **5** Dear friend, you are serving Jesus loyally whenever you do things to help fellow believers, even those whom you do not know. **6-7** Some of them have reported before the congregation here how you have shown that you love them. Such people are traveling in order to be obedient to Jesus and they have decided to allow only fellow believers to help them as they travel. Therefore it is good that you give such people what they need for traveling in a generous way that honors God. **8** In fact, all of us who believe in Jesus should give these people whatever they need. Then it will be as though we are working alongside them as they help others to know God's true message.

9 I wrote a letter to your group of believers to tell them to help those other believers. However, Diotrephes, who wants to dominate your group, refuses to do this. **10** So when I arrive there I will publicly tell everyone what he does: He says bad things about us that are not true. In addition to doing that, he also refuses to welcome the believers who are traveling in order to do God's work. He even prevents those who do want to welcome them and forces them to leave the group of believers!

11 Dear friend, do not copy a bad example like that. Instead, do the good things that you see good people doing. Remember that people who do good deeds truly belong to God. But anyone who keeps doing what is bad does not know God.

12 People widely praise Demetrius as a good person. The way that he lives according to God's true message also makes it clear that he is a good person. We also confirm that he is a good person, and you know that what we say is true.

13 There are many **more** things about which I could write to you. But I do not want to write to you **about them** in a letter. **14** Instead, I hope to come and see you soon. Then we will talk directly with one another. **15** I pray that God will help you live peacefully. The believers **here** greet you. Please greet for us **each of** the believers **there** individually.

Jude

1 **1** I, Jude, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am a brother of James. I am writing to you whom God has called, to you whom God the Father loves, to you whom Jesus the Messiah is keeping for himself. **2** I pray that God will increase his merciful acts toward you and make you more peaceful and make you experience more of his love.

3 Fellow believers whom I love, I tried my best to write a letter to you about how God has saved all of us who believe. However, I needed to write this letter instead in order to urge you to defend the true things that we believe. These are things that God has given for all time to all those whom he has made holy. **4** I am urging you to do this because some men have crept stealthily into your meetings. They are men whom God has chosen to condemn a long time ago. They do ungodly things. They think that our God permits people to be sexually immoral because he is kind. They also oppose what is true about Jesus the Messiah, who alone owns us and rules over us.

5 Although you previously knew all these things, I desire to remind you of them. Remember that after Jesus rescued the people of Israel from the country of Egypt, he destroyed those people among them who did not trust him. **6** Also, some angels did not continue to remain in their proper places where they had authority but abandoned them. Because they did this God has imprisoned them forever in darkness in hell. God did this in order to judge them on the important day when he judges everything. **7** The same is true of the people who lived in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities near them. They acted in a sexually immoral way in the same way as those angels did. They participated in all kinds of improper sexual acts. By causing these angels and people to suffer for eternity in the fire of hell, God is making them an example of those who reject him. **8** Similarly, these false teachers are dreamers who not only make their own bodies dirty by living immorally, but also reject the Lord's commands. They even insult God's glorious angels.

9 Even the archangel Michael was not so bold as to speak slanderous accusations against Satan when he argued with him concerning the dead body of Moses. Instead, he merely said,

“May the Lord reprove you!” **10** By contrast, these **false teachers** speak evil words about spiritual things that they do not understand. They are just like animals that cannot think rationally. The things that they are naturally able to understand are destroying them.

11 How sad it is for them! They act like Cain, **who murdered his brother**. They have dedicated themselves to committing the same sin that Balaam committed in order to get money. God will certainly destroy them like he destroyed Korah and those who rebelled **against Moses with him**. **12** These people are shamelessly eating with you. At your fellowship meals they are like rocks hidden under the water that ships crash against. They only take care of themselves. They are **useless,** like clouds that the wind carries away before they can give rain. They are **useless,** like trees that do not bear fruit at harvest time. **They are like trees** that will die twice because God will uproot them. **13** They are **uncontrollable,** like the sea’s thrashing waves. They display their disgraceful acts just like the waves bring up foam. **They are like** stars that do not stay where they should in the sky. God is reserving the dark gloom **of hell** for them forever.

14 Even Enoch, the seventh person in the line of people who descended from Adam, spoke about these false teachers when he said: “Listen carefully to this: The Lord will certainly come with a countless number of his holy **angels**. **15** **They will come** to judge everyone and rebuke everyone for all their ungodly deeds that they have done in ungodly ways, and for all the harsh insults that these people, who sin and dishonor God, spoke against Jesus.” **16** These **false teachers** grumble **to themselves** and complain **to others**. They live according to their sinful desires and brag about themselves. They flatter people in order to get what they want **from them**.

17 But you **fellow believers** whom I love, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus the Messiah said long ago. **18** **Remember** that they told you, “In the last days **before Jesus returns,** there will be people who mock **the true things that God has told us**. **They will** live according to their own sinful desires that dishonor God.” **19** These **mockers** are the people who are making believers angry with each other. **They live according to their** natural instincts. The **Holy** Spirit does not dwell within them.

20 However, you **fellow believers** whom I love, by increasing your trust in God and by praying with the Holy Spirit’s help, **21** keep living in a way that enables you to experience

God's love. **Do this** while expecting the merciful return of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, **which will result in** living eternally **with him**.

22 And be merciful to those who are confused **about what they should believe**. **23** But rescue other people urgently, as if you are pulling them out of the fire of hell. And be merciful to some other people, but be cautious with them, as if just touching their clothing could make you sinful.

24 God is able to prevent you from returning to a sinful life. **He is also able** to take you without sin into his glorious presence. **You will stand there** with great joy. **25** There is only one God. He has saved us as a result of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah **did for us**. I pray that everyone will recognize that God is glorious, majestic, powerful, and rules with great authority. **He was like that** before time began. **He is like that** today, and **he will remain like that** forever! May it truly be so!

Revelation

1 **1** This book is about things that God revealed to Jesus the Messiah. These things are just
about to happen. God revealed them to Jesus so that he could tell the people who believe in
him about them. Jesus shared these things by sending his angel to show them to me, John, a
man who serves him faithfully. **2** I, John, am reporting to you everything that I saw concerning
this message from God that Jesus the Messiah revealed to me. **3** How happy is the person who
reads this book of prophecy for others to hear, and how happy are all who hear it and obey
what this prophecy says, because these events will happen soon. **4** I, John, am writing this
letter to you seven groups of believers in the province of Asia. May God continue to be kind to
you and make you peaceful. God exists, he has always existed, and he will come and judge
everyone in the future. May the seven spirits who are in front of the throne of God also
continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful. **5** May Jesus the Messiah also continue to
be kind to you and make you peaceful. He has reliably told us the message from God. He is the
first one whom God caused to become alive again after he had died. He is the one who rules
the kings of the world. Because he loves us, he shed his blood for us when he died on the cross,
and as a result, God has forgiven our sins. **6** Jesus is the one who has caused us to become
people over whose lives God rules. He has also made us priests who serve God, who is the
Father of Jesus. May people glorify Jesus and acknowledge him as their ruler throughout
eternity. May it be so! **7** Pay attention! Jesus is going to come back from heaven through the
sky. Everyone will see him, including those who killed him by nailing him to a cross. When
they see him coming, every people group in the world will grieve in sorrow for their sins. May
it be just like that! **8** The Lord God says: "I am the one who began all things. I am the one who
will cause all things to come to an end. I am the one who exists, who has always existed, and
who will come and judge everyone in the future. I am the one who rules over everything and
everyone." **9** I, John, believe in Jesus as you do. Like you, I am patiently enduring the troubles
that everyone experiences whose life Jesus rules. The Roman government had put me in exile on
the island of Patmos because I was telling people God's message about who Jesus is. **10** It was
a Sunday, the day on which believers gather to worship because God made Jesus alive again on
that day. The Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. I heard

someone speaking behind me. His voice was as loud as the blast of a horn. **11** The person speaking said to me, "Write what you see on a scroll. Send what you have written to seven groups of believers. Send it to the believers in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." **12** When I heard this voice, I turned my head to see who was speaking to me. When I turned, I saw seven golden lamp holders. **13** In the midst of the lamp holders I saw someone who looked like a human being. He wore a robe that reached down to his feet. He also wore a band of golden fabric across his chest. **14** The hair on his head was gleaming like white wool or like white snow. His eyes were bright like a fiery flame. **15** His feet shone like bronze that the heat of a furnace had refined. When he spoke, his resonant voice was like the noise of a great river of rushing water. **16** The one who looked like a human was holding seven stars in his right hand. A sword with two sharp edges was extending from his mouth. His face shone as brightly as the sun shines during the middle of the day. **17** When I saw him, I bowed down in front of him. I was so overcome that I could not move. But he put his right hand on me and said to me, "Do not be afraid! I am the one who began all things, and I am the one who will cause all things to end. **18** I have been alive forever. When I came to earth, I died, but indeed I am now alive again for all eternity. I have the power to make anyone who has died become alive again. **19** Therefore, write down this vision that you are seeing of me. I will reveal the truth to you about what is happening now and about what will happen in the future. I want you to write down those things as well. **20** I will explain the symbolic meaning of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lamp holders. The seven stars represent the angels of the seven groups of believers. The seven lamp holders represent the seven groups of believers.

2 **1** Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Ephesus: 'I am the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lamp holders. This is what I say to you: **2** "I am aware of all that you have done. I am aware of how hard you have worked for me. I am aware of how patiently you have endured difficult times. I am also aware that you do not accept wicked people. When people falsely claim to be genuine leaders, you prove that they are lying. **3** I am aware of how patiently you have endured. I am also aware that you have suffered for my sake. I am also aware that you have not abandoned your faith in me even though you have suffered. **4** Nevertheless, I must criticize you about

something: You no longer love me as you did when you first believed in me. **5** Therefore, remember how you used to love me. Love me again the way you did at first. Now if you do not love me again in that way, I will judge you and I will not allow you to continue being a group of believers. **6** However, I do praise you for something that you are doing well. You refuse to accept what the disciples of Nicolaus are doing. **Those disciples eat food that people have sacrificed to idols and they commit sexual sins.** I myself completely reject what they are doing. **7** Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. I will permit anyone who is victorious to eat **fruit** from the tree that gives life. That tree is in the garden of God.”’ **8** Next, write **this message** to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Smyrna: ‘I am the one who began all things and who will cause all things to end. I am also the one who died and became alive again. This is what I say to you: **9** “I am aware that people have persecuted you. **I am aware that** you are poor, although you have everything you need spiritually. **I am aware that** people are insulting you. Those people claim to be Jews, but they are not acting as if they truly belong to God. When they gather together, they help the devil **instead of serving God**. **10** Those people are going to make you suffer. Do not be afraid, but watch out! The devil will soon lead them to put some of you in jail. The devil wants to show that you will abandon your faith in me if you suffer. You will have to suffer for ten days. But remain loyal to me even if you have to die. If you do, I will give you **everlasting** life as a reward. **11** Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. Whoever is victorious will never die a second time.”’ **12** Next, write **this message** to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Pergamum: ‘I am the one who has a sword with two sharp edges. This is what I say to you: **13** “I am aware of where you live. **It is a place** where Satan controls people. **I am also aware that** you are very loyal to me. You did not abandon your faith in me even when people attacked **your fellow believer** Antipas. He told others about me, and he remained loyal to me. People killed him right in front of you, because Satan has such an influence in your city. **14** Nevertheless, I must criticize you about a few things. Some people in your group firmly believe that they should do what **the ancient prophet** Balaam taught. It was Balaam who showed Balak**, the king of Moab,** how to tempt the people of Israel to sin. Balak led the Israelites to eat meat that people had sacrificed to idols. Balak also led the Israelites to commit sexual sins. **15** Just as Balak followed Balaam’s advice, some people in your group firmly believe that they may similarly do what the disciples of Nicolaus teach. **They eat food that**

people have sacrificed to idols and they commit sexual sins. **16** But what the disciples of Nicolaus teach is wrong. So everyone in your group must stop doing those things! Now if some of you do not stop, I will immediately judge those people. I will pronounce a sentence of judgment against them and punish them. **17** Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. To the one who is victorious I will award some special bread that I have hidden for him. I will also give him a white pebble upon which I have written a new name for him. No one will know what this name is except the one to whom I give it."' **18** Next, write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Thyatira: 'I am the Son of God, whose eyes shine like a fiery flame and whose feet shine like bronze. This is what I say to you: **19** "I am aware of all that you are doing. I am aware that you love one another because you love me. I am aware that you are very loyal to me. I am aware of how you are serving me. I am aware that you are enduring patiently. Finally, I am aware that you are now doing more than you did when you first believed in me.

20 Nevertheless, I must criticize you about something. You tolerate a woman in your assembly who is like that wicked queen in the Old Testament whose name was Jezebel. She claims falsely that she teaches the truth from God. But in fact, by what she teaches, she is misleading people who believe in me. She is teaching them to commit sexual sins and to eat meat that other people have sacrificed to idols. **21** Although I have allowed her sufficient time to stop teaching these things, she refuses to stop. She continues to act immorally. **22** Pay attention! I am going to punish her with a terrible sickness. I will also cause those who act immorally as she does to suffer greatly if they do not stop doing what she does **23** And as a judgment against her, I will kill the children she has had as a result of her sexual immorality. Then all the groups of believers will recognize that I examine what everyone thinks and desires. I will punish or reward each one of you as you deserve. **24** But the rest of you believers in the city of Thyatira have not obeyed this woman's teachings. You have not taken part in what she calls the secret practices that Satan taught her. I have something to say to you as well. I am going to ask you to do just one thing. **25** Just continue to obey the true teaching that you have received until I return.

26 To the one who is victorious, who continues to do what I command until he dies, I will give power to rule the people groups on earth. **27** Those to whom I give this authority will rule the people groups with irresistible power. They will destroy evildoers as completely as if they were smashing clay pots. **28** They will rule so powerfully because I will share with them the authority that I myself have received from God my Father. I will also give them the assurance that God

is beginning a wonderful new era. [29] Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.”’

3 [1] Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Sardis: ‘I am the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I have these things to say to you: “I am aware of what you are doing. You have a reputation for being spiritually vigorous. However, you are not really acting out of zeal for me. [2] Be careful! You are at risk of losing your devotion for me completely. Renew the devotion that you still have left. You have not yet done all that God knows you should have done. [3] So remember how eagerly you accepted God’s instruction when you heard it. Be sorry for disobeying and start obeying again. If you are not careful to obey me, I will judge you when you are not expecting it. You will not know at what time I am going to punish you. [4] Nevertheless, there are a few believers there in the city of Sardis who have not been doing what is wrong. They will live with me forever and be pure in every way. This is what they deserve. [5] In this way I will completely purify the one who is victorious. I will make sure that his name always remains in the Book of Life. I will tell God my Father and his angels that I know him personally. [6] Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.”’ [7] Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Philadelphia: ‘I am the one who always does what is right. I am the one who always says what is true. Just as King David had authority to allow people to enter the ancient city of Jerusalem, so I have the authority to allow people to enter heaven. If I create an opportunity for someone, then no one can deny him that opportunity. If I deny an opportunity to someone, then no one can give him that opportunity. I have these things to say to you: [8] “I know what you are doing. I know that although you are weak, you have obeyed my commands You have acknowledged that you believe in me. Be aware that I am giving you an opportunity that no one will be able to deny to you. [9] Pay attention! Some people are denying that you belong to me. Those people claim to be Jews, but they are not acting the way people do who truly belong to God. When they gather together, they help the devil instead of serving God. Pay attention! I will make those people recognize that I love you. They will come and honor you greatly when they recognize this. [10] You obeyed me when I commanded you to endure suffering patiently. And so I will keep you safe during the time of trouble that all of humanity will soon experience. How people everywhere respond to this trouble will show what they are really like. [11] I am coming soon.

So continue to believe in me. Do not let anyone cause you to lose the reward that God wants to give you. **12** I will make the one who is victorious secure, like a pillar in the temple of my God. He will remain in God's temple forever. I will write my God's name on him. I will also write on him the name of the city of my God. That city is the New Jerusalem. It will come down out of heaven from my God. I will also write my new name on the one who is victorious. **13** Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.'" **14** Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Laodicea: 'I am the one who confirms all of God's promises. I am the one who testifies about God with complete reliability. I am the ruler over all of God's creation. I have these things to say to you: **15** "I am aware of what you are doing. You have not abandoned your faith, but you do not love me very much. I would rather have you commit yourselves for me or even against me! **16** But you are just mediocre. You do not love me very much, but you still claim that you believe in me. That is disgusting, and because of it, I am going to reject you. **17** You keep bragging about how very rich you are. You do not realize that you are actually unhappy. You need someone to pity you. You are actually poor, blind, and lacking clothes. **18** I advise you to get everything from me that you need, as if you were buying pure gold from me that would make you truly rich. Let me make you righteous, as if you were buying white garments from me so that you could be wearing clothes instead of being shamefully naked. Let me help you to understand the truth, as if you were buying eye salve from me to put on your sick eyes so that you could see. **19** I carefully discipline everyone I love. So sincerely change your behavior. **20** Pay attention! I am urging each one of you to love me genuinely, as if I were standing at the door of your house and knocking to get you to open it. If anyone responds to me by loving me, I will become his dear friend. It will be as if he heard me calling from his door and he opened it and I came into his house and we ate a meal together. **21** I have been victorious and now rule with my Father. In the same way, I will permit everyone who is victorious to rule with me. **22** Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers.'"'"

4 **1** After these things, I, John, saw something remarkable: a door open in heaven! The one who had spoken to me previously, whose voice had been like a loud trumpet, spoke to me again. He said, "Come up here! I will show you events that must happen later." **2** At once the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. I saw something

remarkable: A throne was there in heaven and someone was sitting on that throne. [3] The ruler who sat on the throne shone like a bright red jasper gem and like an orange carnelian gem. Around the throne a rainbow was shining like a brilliant green emerald gem. [4] Around the throne there were 24 other thrones. On those thrones 24 elders were sitting. They were wearing pure white garments and they had golden crowns on their heads. [5] Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder came out from the throne. In front of the throne, seven torches were burning. These torches represented the seven spirits of God. [6] In front of the throne there was also something that looked like a sea made of glass. It was clear like crystal. A living creature stood on each of the four sides of the throne. Eyes covered each creature, all around its body. [7] The first living creature resembled a lion. The second living creature resembled a bull. The third living creature had a face like that of a human being. The fourth living creature resembled a flying eagle. [8] Each of the four living creatures had six wings. Eyes completely covered these living creatures. All the time, without stopping, they say: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God who rules over everything and everyone. He is the one who has always existed, who exists now, and who will come **and judge everyone** in the future." [9-10] The living beings repeatedly praise, honor, and thank God, who sits upon the throne and who lives forever. When they do, the 24 elders also kneel before God at his throne. They bow down to God, who lives forever. They place their crowns in front of his throne and they say, [11] "God our Lord, you deserve to have all creatures glorify you and honor you and acknowledge how powerful you are. You deserve this because you created everything. Yes, everything exists just as you determined to create it."

5 [1] Then I saw that the person who was sitting on the throne was holding a scroll in his right hand. He had written words on both sides of the scroll. But he had then sealed the scroll shut with seven pieces of wax**, so no one could read what he had written**. [2] I saw a powerful angel who was asking in a loud voice: "Who is the person who qualifies to break open the pieces of wax on the scroll and then unroll the scroll **and read what it says**?" [3] Yet no heavenly being, no person on the earth, and no one in the abode of the dead was sufficiently worthy to open the scroll and read it. [4] When I saw that no one anywhere was sufficiently worthy to open the scroll and read it, I wept bitterly. **I wept because I knew that what God had written was important, but I thought that no one would ever find out what he had written**. [5] But one of the elders said to me, "You do not need to weep! Here is the person we are looking for! He is the

person whom the prophets described as the Lion from the tribe of Judah and as a branch that would grow from David's roots. He is victorious! Therefore, he is sufficiently worthy to break open the seven pieces of wax on the scroll and open the scroll!" **6** Then I saw that a lamb was standing by the throne. The four living beings and the elders surrounded him. He was alive, but he had marks that showed that others had once killed him violently. He had seven horns. He also had seven eyes. Those are the seven spirits of God that God sends throughout all the world. **7** The Lamb came up to the throne, and the person who was sitting on the throne handed the scroll to him. **8** As soon as the Lamb accepted the scroll, the four living beings and the 24 elders knelt down in front of the Lamb. The elders each held a harp and some golden bowls that contained incense. The incense symbolized the prayers of people who belong to God. **9** The living beings and the elders sang a song that no one had ever sung before. They sang to the Lamb, "You deserve to receive this scroll and to break open its pieces of wax so that you can read what it says. You deserve this because when you gave up your life, you paid with your own blood to set people free from sin so that they could worship and obey God. You did this for people all over the world. **10** You have caused them to become people over whom our God rules and to become people who will lead others to worship God. They will be rulers of the people who live in the world." **11** As I was seeing these events, I heard many angels singing. These angels surrounded the throne, the living beings, and the elders. There were millions of angels, so many that no one could count how many there were. **12** The angels were singing loudly, "The Lamb who gave up his life deserves for everyone to honor, glorify, and bless him and acknowledge how powerful, wealthy, wise, and strong he is!" **13** Then I also heard every creature that exists in heaven, on the earth, underneath the earth, and in the sea—yes, every creature in all of those places—singing, "May everyone forever praise and honor and glorify the one sitting on the throne and the Lamb and acknowledge how powerful they are!" **14** When the millions of angels and every creature sang these things, the four living beings said, "So be it!" Then the elders knelt down on the ground in front of both God and the Lamb to worship them.

6 **1** Then I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven pieces of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard one of the four living beings say as loudly as a clap of thunder, "Come forth!" **2** Then I saw something remarkable: a white horse whose rider was holding a bow and arrows! God gave him a crown to wear in recognition of the victories he was going to win. The

rider went out from heaven fully capable to fight and defeat God's enemies. **3** Then the Lamb opened the second piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard the second living being say, "Come forth!" **4** Then another horse appeared. It was bright red. There was also a rider sitting on that horse. God gave the rider the power to cause wars on the earth. That way the world's people would kill each other. For this purpose, God gave the rider on the bright red horse a huge sword. **5** The Lamb then opened the third piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard the third living being say, "Come forth!" I then saw something else remarkable: a black horse whose rider was holding a pair of balance scales! **6** Then I heard a sound like a voice coming from among the four living beings. It said, "Make wheat so scarce that a person will have to work an entire day to earn enough money to buy one liter of it. Also make barley so scarce that a person will have to work an entire day to earn enough money to buy three liters of it. However, make sure that olive oil and wine remain so plentiful that their prices do not increase." **7** The Lamb then opened the fourth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I next heard the fourth living being say, "Come forth!" **8** I then saw something else remarkable: a horse that was pale because it was diseased and that had two riders. The name of the first rider was The One Who Causes People to Die. The name of the rider sitting behind him on the horse was The Place Where Dead People Go. God gave these riders the power to kill a quarter of all the people in the world. They could kill them by causing wars or famine or epidemics or by making wild animals come into populated areas and kill people.
9 The Lamb then opened the fifth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I saw, at the base of an altar in heaven, the souls of people whom others had killed because they spoke God's message faithfully as reliable witnesses. **10** These souls called out **to God** loudly, "You, Master, always do what is right and decide what is right! So please condemn and punish the people on the earth who killed us!" **11** Then God gave each of them a white flowing robe. God told them to be patient a little longer, because there were others who were also going to die rather than deny their faith in Jesus. But as soon as all of them had died, God would punish the people who had killed them and had killed the people whose souls were now in heaven.
12 Then I saw the Lamb open the sixth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, the earth shook violently. The sun turned very dark, like mourning cloth woven from black goat hair. The moon was full and it became as red as blood. **13** Then the stars fell from the sky down to the earth. They fell just as figs left on a fig tree all fall off when the tree shakes in a very strong wind. **14** The sky split open and rolled away in both directions, just as a scroll rolls

away in both directions if it splits in two. All the mountains and islands also moved out of their places. 15 Then all the people on earth, even kings, high-ranking officials, military officers, rich people, and influential individuals, hid within caves and mountain rocks. 16 They told the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and cover us! That way God, who sits on the throne in heaven, will not be able to see us! And that way the Lamb will not be able to punish us! 17 For today is the terrible day on which God and the Lamb will punish people who have done wrong, and we know that none of us are innocent!”

7 1 After these events I saw four angels standing on the earth. One was standing to the north of me, one to the east, one to the south, and one to the west. They were keeping the winds from those directions from blowing on the land or on the sea or against any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel coming towards me from the east. This angel was holding a tool that would create the mark of the only true God. This angel called out loudly to the four angels whom God had allowed to keep the winds from blowing on the land and the sea. 3 The angel told the other four angels, “Wait, first we must mark the people who believe in and obey our God with a seal on their foreheads. Until then, do not keep the winds from blowing on the land or the sea or any tree.” 4 Then the angel and his fellow angels marked all of the people who believed in and obeyed God. I heard someone say how many people they had marked. It was 144,000 people from every tribe of Israel. 5 The angels marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Judah with a seal. They also marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Reuben. From the tribe of Gad they also marked 12,000 people. 6 The angels marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Asher with a seal. They also marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Naphtali. From the tribe of Manasseh they also marked 12,000 people. 7 The angels marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Simeon with a seal. They also marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Levi. From the tribe of Issachar they also marked 12,000 people. 8 The angels marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Zebulun with a seal. They also marked 12,000 people from the tribe of Joseph. From the tribe of Benjamin they also marked 12,000 people with a seal. 9 After these events, I saw something remarkable: a huge crowd of people! There were so many people in the crowd that no one could count them. They came from every nation, tribe, and people group, and they spoke every language. They all stood in front of the throne, where the Lamb was. They all wore flowing white robes, and they were all holding palm branches. 10 They were shouting loudly, “Our God, who rules over everything, has saved us! The Lamb has saved us!” 11 Then

all the angels stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living beings. The angels all knelt down in front of the throne with their faces on the ground and worshiped God. **12** The angels all said, “Yes, may it be so! We praise, glorify, thank, and honor you, our God, forever! We proclaim forever that you are wise, powerful, and strong! May it be so!” **13** One of the elders then said to me, “I want to make sure you know who these people are who are wearing white flowing robes and where they have come from.” **14** I answered him, “Sir, I need you to tell me who they are.” He then told me: “These are the people who remained faithful to Jesus during a time of great persecution. This showed that they have become pure from sin by trusting in Jesus, who shed his blood for them when he died on the cross. **15** Therefore, they remain in front of God’s throne. They worship God inside his temple without stopping. God, the one who rules from the throne in heaven, will protect them. **16** God will make sure that they always have enough food to eat. God will also make sure that they always have enough to drink. The rays of the sun will never again burn them. The heat from the sun will never again exhaust them. **17** This is because the Lamb who is by the throne will care for them just as a shepherd cares for his sheep. The Lamb will enable them to receive everlasting life, as if they were drinking from springs where fresh, pure water flows. God will help them to stop crying and be joyful.”

8 **1** Then the Lamb opened the seventh piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, there was no sound at all in heaven for a short time. **2** I then saw the seven angels who are God’s personal attendants. He gave each of them a trumpet. **3** Another angel then came and stood at the altar. He had a golden bowl for burning incense. God gave him a large quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all God’s people on the golden altar in front of God’s throne. **4** **The angel started burning the incense.** The smoke from the incense burning in the container that the angel was holding went up to God along with the prayers of God’s people. **5** Then the angel took the golden incense bowl and filled it with coals of fire from the altar. He threw these coals and the burning incense onto the earth. When he did, thunder crashed and rumbled, lightning flashed, and the earth shook.

6 Then the seven angels, each of whom had one of the seven trumpets, got ready to blow them. **7** Then the first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire appeared. There was blood in the midst of the hail and fire. All of it poured down onto the earth. The fire burned up one third

of everything on the surface of the land, one third of the trees, and all the green grass. 8 Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something that was like a huge mountain that was on fire fell into the ocean. As a result, one third of the ocean became blood, 9 one third of the living creatures in the ocean died, and one third of the ships in the ocean sank 10 Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a huge star fell from the sky. The star was blazing as if it were on fire. Parts of the star fell into one third of the rivers and into one third of the springs of water on earth. 11 The name of the star is Bitterness. When it fell into one third of the rivers and springs, their water became poisonous. Many people died from drinking that poisonous water. 12 Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and God struck the sun, the moon, and the stars so that they lost their light for one third of the time. The sun did not shine during one third of the day, and the moon and stars did not shine during one third of the night.

13 Then, as I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying high in the sky shouting loudly, "Three terrible things will happen to the people who live on the earth when the three remaining angels blow their trumpets! They are about to blow them!"

9 1 Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. God gave it the key to the deep, dark pit. 2 When he opened that pit, a huge amount of smoke rose from it, as if it were a great burning furnace. The smoke prevented anyone from seeing the light of the sun and the sky. 3 Then locusts came out of the smoke and started swarming the earth. God gave these locusts the power to sting people just as scorpions sting people. 4 God told the locusts that they should not eat up all the grass on the ground and all the plants and all the leaves on the trees as locusts usually do. God told the locusts just to sting the people who did not have the mark on their foreheads that showed they belonged to God. 5 God did not allow the locusts to kill those people. Instead, the locusts kept torturing people for five months. The pain those people felt was like the pain that a scorpion causes when it stings someone. 6 During the time when the locusts torture people who refuse to belong to God, those people will be in so much pain that they will want to die. But God will make sure those people stay alive to experience the punishment for their sin. 7 The locusts looked like horses that were ready for battle. They had what looked like golden crowns on their heads. Their faces were like human faces. 8 They had long hair like women's long hair. Their teeth were as strong as lions' teeth. 9 They wore breastplates made of metal. When they were flying, their

wings made a noise like the roar of many horses pulling chariots and rushing into battle.
10 They had tails like the tails of scorpions. With these tails they could sting people. Their
power to harm people during those five months was in their tails. 11 The king who ruled over
them was the angel of the deep, dark pit. His name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon. In the
Greek language it is Apollyon. Both of these names mean Destroyer.

12 **After five months the locusts went away.** That ended the first terrible event. But be aware
that two more terrible events are still to come.

13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four corners of the
golden altar that is in God's presence. 14 The voice was saying to the sixth angel, the one who
had the trumpet, "Release the four angels whom I have bound at the great river Euphrates."
15 Then those four angels went free. They had been waiting for that exact moment. They went
free so they could enable their soldiers to kill one third of humanity. 16 I heard someone say
how many soldiers there were riding on horses. The number was 200,000,000. 17 In the vision
I saw what the horses and the soldiers who rode them looked like. The soldiers wore
breastplates that were red like fire, blue like sapphire, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the
horses were like the heads of lions. From their mouths came fire, smoke, and fumes of burning
sulfur. 18 Those three things—the fire, the smoke, and the burning sulfur from the horses'
mouths—killed one third of humanity. 19 But the power of the horses was also in their tails, as
well as in their mouths. Their tails were like snakes, and they had heads that bit people. 20 But
there were still people whom the plagues of fire and smoke and burning sulfur did not kill.
Those people did not stop doing sinful things. They also did not stop worshiping demons and
idols that they had made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood. The people did not stop
worshiping the idols even though they were lifeless statues that could not help people. 21 They
also did not stop murdering other people, practicing sorcery, acting in sexually immoral ways,
and stealing things.

10 1 Then in the vision I saw another mighty angel come down out of heaven. A cloud
surrounded him. There was a rainbow over his head. His face shone brightly like the sun. His
legs glowed like columns of fire. 2 He had in his hand a small scroll that was open. He set his
right foot on the ocean and his left foot on the land. 3 He shouted something in a voice as loud

as the roar of a lion. As he shouted, I heard seven thunderclaps. In the thunder were words that I could understand. 4 I was about to record what the thunders had said. But then a voice from heaven told me, “Keep secret what the thunders said! Do not write it down!” 5 Then the angel whom I had seen standing on the ocean and the land raised his right hand toward heaven in order to swear an oath. 6 He asked God, who lives forever and who created everything that exists, to confirm that what he said was true. The angel said that God would no longer delay in doing what he had planned to do. 7 He said that when the time came for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, then God would finish his secret plan. That is what God told his servants the prophets long ago.

8 Then the one whom I had heard speak from heaven spoke to me again. He said, “Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the ocean and on the land.” 9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it. When you eat it, it will taste sweet like honey, but after you eat it, your stomach will hurt.” 10 So I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. When I ate it, it tasted sweet like honey, but after I ate it, my stomach hurt. 11 Then someone said to me, “You must speak God’s messages again about many nations, many people groups, speakers of many languages, and many kings.”

11 1 Then an angel gave me a reed similar to a measuring stick. God said to me, “Go to my temple, measure it and the altar in it, and count the people who are worshiping there. 2 But do not measure the courtyard outside of the temple building. I have given that to the non-Jewish people groups. As a result, they will oppress the people who live in the city of Jerusalem for 42 months. 3 I will send two witnesses to announce what I reveal to them for 1,260 days. They will show they are sad about the people’s sin by wearing rough clothes that someone has woven from goat hair.” 4 Those witnesses are the ones whom the two olive trees and the two lampstands represent. Those trees and lampstands are in the presence of the Lord, who rules the earth. 5 Now if anyone tries to harm those witnesses, they breathe fire out of their mouths and burn them up. In this way the two witnesses will certainly kill anyone who wants to harm them. 6 Those witnesses will have the authority to command no rain to fall from the sky during the time that they are announcing what God reveals to them. They also will have the authority to cause the water in lakes and streams to become blood. They will also

have the authority to make many kinds of plagues happen on the earth. They will do these things when they sense that this will emphasize their message from God. **7** But when they have finished announcing their message from God, the beast that comes up from the deep, dark pit will attack them. The beast will defeat them and kill them. **8** Now the two witnesses were announcing God's message in the great city that people symbolically call Sodom because its people are very evil. People also call that city Egypt because its people treat God's people badly. That is also the city where Jesus, whom the witnesses were serving, died on a cross. To insult the witnesses, the people of the city will not bury their bodies. They will leave their bodies lying in the city's open area. **9** Individuals from many people groups, tribes, language groups, and nations will look at those dead bodies for three and a half days. But the people of the city will not allow anyone to bury those bodies. **10** When the people who do not honor God see that the witnesses are dead, they will be very glad and hold a celebration. They will even send gifts to each other to celebrate. They will be so happy because the two prophets are dead who sent plagues that made them suffer. **11** But after three and a half days, God will make them alive again. They will stop lying dead and stand up! The people who see them alive again will be terrified. **12** Then the two witnesses will hear a loud voice from heaven saying to them: "Come up here!" Then they will go up into heaven in a cloud. Their enemies will watch them go up. **13** At that same time there will be a great earthquake, as a result of which a tenth of the buildings in the city will collapse. That will kill 7,000 people. The rest of the people will become very afraid and acknowledge that the true God had justly punished them for killing the witnesses.

14 That will be the second terrible event. Be aware that the third terrible event will happen soon afterwards.

15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and voices in heaven shouted loudly, "The Lord our God and the Messiah whom he has appointed will now rule all the people in the world! They will continue to rule those people forever!" **16** The 24 elders who sit on thrones around God's throne bowed down with their faces on the ground and worshiped him. **17** They said:

> "Lord God, you are the one who rules over everything!
> You are the one who exists now!
> You are the one who has always existed!

We thank you that you have so powerfully defeated
everyone who has rebelled against you,
and you now rule over all the people in the world.
18 The unbelieving people of the nations were raging angrily at you.
As a result, you have punished them.
You have decided that this is the right time for you to judge all those who have died.
You are rewarding your servants who spoke your message and the people who belong to you,
You are rewarding all those who honor you,
whoever they are.
You have decided that it is time for you to destroy the people who have been destroying the earth."

19 Then God opened the doors his temple in heaven, and in it I saw the sacred chest that contains symbols of God's promise. Lightning was flashing. I heard the rumbling of thunder. The earth shook, and large hailstones fell from the sky.

12 1 Then something very significant appeared in the sky. It was a woman who was wearing the sun as her clothing. She was standing on the moon. On her head was a crown that was made of 12 stars. 2 She was about to have a baby. She was screaming in pain because it was so difficult to deliver her baby. 3 Then something else significant appeared in the sky. It was a huge red dragon. It had seven heads and ten horns. It had a royal crown on each of its heads. 4 The dragon's tail dragged a third of the stars out of the sky and threw them onto the earth. The dragon set himself in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he could eat her child as soon as he was born. 5 Then the woman gave birth to a son. He is destined to rule all groups of people with complete authority. God snatched away this child **for safety** and brought him up to his throne in heaven. 6 But the woman fled to a desolate region. God had made a place ready for her there where people would take care of her for 1,260 days.

7 Then a battle began in heaven. Michael and the angels he commanded fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back **against Michael and his angels**. 8 But the dragon

lost the battle, and God did not allow the dragon and his angels to stay in heaven after that.
9 Instead, God threw the huge dragon out of heaven. That dragon is the same evil spirit who appeared as a serpent long ago. His names are the Devil and Satan. He deceives everyone who lives in the world. God threw him and all of his angels down to the earth. **10** Then I heard someone in heaven shout loudly,

> "Now our God has saved his people by his power, and he rules all people!
> Now his Messiah has begun to rule!
> This is because God has thrown the accuser of our fellow believers out of heaven.
> He was continually coming to God and accusing believers of doing wrong things.
> **11** But our fellow believers overcame him. This is because the Lamb shed his blood as a sacrifice for them
> and because they spoke the truth about him to other people.
> They did not want just to stay alive.
> They were willing to die if necessary for speaking the truth about him.
> **12** So all of you living in heaven should rejoice!
> But terrible things will happen to you people who live on the earth and travel on the ocean because the devil is now among you.
> He is very angry because he knows that he has only a short time before God judges and punishes him."

13 When the dragon realized that God had thrown him down to the earth, he tried to attack the woman who had given birth to a son. **14** But God gave the woman two wings like the wings of a very large eagle. These enabled her to fly away to a desolate region. God had prepared a safe place for her there. In that place, God took care of her for three and one-half years. The serpent**, that is, the dragon,** was not able to reach her there. **15** Then the serpent poured a flood of water out of his mouth toward the woman. He was trying to sweep her away with the water. **16** But the ground helped the woman. The ground opened up a big hole and the flood that the dragon poured out from his mouth went down into the hole. **17** Then the dragon was very angry with the woman, so he went away to fight against the rest of her children. They

are the people who obey God's commandments and who speak the truth about Jesus. [18] Then the dragon stood on the ocean shore.

13 [1] Then I saw a beast come up out of the ocean. It had ten horns and seven heads. On each of its horns there was a royal crown. On each of its heads there was a name that insulted God. [2] This beast was like a leopard, but its feet were like the feet of a bear. Its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. The dragon made the beast very powerful. He also gave him the supreme right to rule over people as their king. [3] One of the heads of the beast looked as if someone had wounded it so that it had died. But that wound had healed. As a result, all the people of the earth marveled at the beast and obeyed it. [4] They worshiped the dragon because he had given the beast authority to rule over them. They also worshiped the beast. They said, "No one is as powerful as the beast! No one could ever fight against it!" [5] The dragon enabled the beast to speak proudly and to insult God. The dragon also enabled it to rule the people on earth. But God would only allow the beast to rule for 42 months. [6] When the beast spoke, it insulted God. It said that God was not really like what people believed him to be like. The beast also insulted the people in heaven among whom God lives. [7] The dragon enabled the beast to fight against God's people and conquer them. The dragon also gave the beast the right to rule over people no matter what tribe they came from or what group they belonged to or what language they spoke or where they lived. [8] The names of some of the people living on earth do not appear in the Book of Life. Those people will worship the beast. The Book of Life belongs to the Lamb. The Lamb gave up his life at the beginning of the world in order to become the Savior. [9] Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to this message from God. [10] If anyone's enemies are going to capture him, they will capture him. If anyone's enemies are going to kill him with a sword, they will kill him with a sword. So God's people must endure suffering and remain faithful to him.

[11] Then I saw another beast come up from the earth. It had two small horns on its head as a sheep has. But its voice sounded like a dragon's voice. [12] This beast from the earth carries out all the orders of the beast from the sea. It requires the people who live on the earth to worship the beast from the sea. That is the beast that almost died but whose wound healed. [13] The beast from the earth also did amazing miracles. It even caused fire to fall from the sky onto the earth while people watched. [14] The dragon gave the beast from the earth the power to do these

miracles on behalf of the beast from the sea. The beast from the earth used the miracles to deceive the people who live on the earth. It told them to make an idol that looked like the beast from the sea. That was the beast that survived a sword wound that seemed to kill it. **15** The dragon gave the beast from the earth the power to make that idol live. Then the idol that looked like the beast from the sea was able to speak. The beast from the earth then commanded that anyone who refused to worship the idol would be killed. **16** The beast from the earth also required each person to have a mark on his right hand or on his forehead. This requirement applied to important people and unimportant people. It applied to people who were rich and people who were poor. It applied to free people and to slaves. It applied to everyone! **17** Then the beast from the earth ordered that no one could buy or sell anything if he did not have this mark. This mark was the name of the beast from the sea or the number that stood for its name. **18** You must think wisely about this: Anyone who understands things well can figure out the identity of the beast from the sea. That is because the number that stands for its name actually represents the name of a man. That number is 666.

14 **1** But then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With him were 144,000 people. He had written his name and his Father's name on their foreheads. **2** I also heard a sound from heaven. It was as loud as the sound of a huge waterfall or of mighty thunder. It also sounded like many people playing on harps. **3** This sound was of the people I saw singing a new song. They were standing in front of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had saved these 144,000 people from among all the people on the earth. Only they could learn that song. **4** Those 144,000 people are spiritually pure, as virgins are morally pure. They have not made themselves impure by worshiping any false god. They are the ones who accompany Jesus, the one who is like a lamb, wherever he goes. They represent all those whom he has saved so far from among the people of the earth. Those who have believed in Jesus will share their faith and lead many others to believe in God and Jesus. **5** These people never denied Jesus. They always lived pure lives.

6 Then I saw another angel flying through the sky. He was bringing God's eternal good news from heaven so that he could proclaim it to the people who live on earth. He will proclaim it to every nation, to every tribe, to speakers of every language, and to every people group. **7** He said in a loud voice, "Honor God and praise him because it is now time for him to judge everyone! Worship him because he is the one who created heaven and earth and the

ocean and the fresh water.” **8** And then another angel came after that one. This angel said, “The very evil city of Babylon has now become a complete ruin! Babylon forced the people of every nation to be unfaithful to God by worshiping idols.” **9** Yet another angel came afterward. This angel said in a loud voice, “If people worship the beast and its image or allow someone to put its mark on their foreheads or on their hands, **10** God will duly punish them. They will stagger from the punishment as if they had drunk strong wine. He will torment them in burning sulfur as his holy angels and the Lamb are watching. **11** The smoke from the fire that torments them will rise forever. God will torment them all the time without stopping. This is what will happen to the people who worship the beast and its image or who allow someone to write its name on them.” **12** God’s people are those who obey what God commands and who trust in Jesus. They must continue to do these things faithfully **because those who disobey God and deny Jesus will experience these torments**. **13** Then I heard someone speaking from heaven and saying, “Write this: How fortunate from now on are those who die as faithful believers in Jesus.” The Holy Spirit says, “Yes, after they die, they will no longer have to endure suffering. Instead, it will be clear that they were doing the right things.”

14 Then I saw something else very significant. I saw a white cloud, and someone was sitting on the cloud who looked like a human being. He was wearing a golden crown on his head. He held a sharp sickle in his hand. **15** Still another angel came out of the temple in heaven. In a loud voice, he said to the one who was sitting on the cloud, “The grain on the earth is ripe. So this is the time to reap it. So use your sickle to reap the grain.” **16** Then the person who looked like a human being and who was sitting on the cloud used his sickle to harvest all of the grain on the earth. **17** Another angel then came out of the heavenly sanctuary. This angel was also holding a sharp sickle. **18** One more angel came from the altar. He is the one who takes care of the fire of the altar. He said in a loud voice to the angel who was holding the sickle, “The grapes on the earth are ripe! So use your sickle to cut the bunches of grapes off of the earth’s grapevines. Then collect those bunches of grapes.” **19** So the angel used his sickle to harvest the grapes. Then he threw the grapes into the huge winepress that represents the place where God will punish people for what they have done wrong. **20** God trampled the grapes in the winepress outside the city. When he did, blood poured out of the winepress! It flowed in such quantity that it formed a stream that was a meter and a half deep and extended for three hundred kilometers.

15 1 Then something else very significant appeared in the sky. I saw seven angels. God had given them the duty to punish rebellious people in seven different ways. This is the last time that God will punish people this way, because through these punishments he will have given people on earth all of the punishment that they deserve.

2 I also saw a great flat area of glass that was sparkling with light. I also saw the people who had overcome the beast by not worshiping it or its image and by not allowing anyone to mark them with the number that represents the beast's name. They were standing on the large flat area of glass. They were holding harps that God had given them. 3 They were singing a song such as God's servant Moses sang long ago. It was the same kind of song that the Lamb now sings. They sang,

"Lord God, who rules over everything,
all that you do is very marvelous!
You always act entirely righteously.
You rule as King forever!
4 O Lord, everyone will fear you and honor you because you alone are holy.
Yes, people from every group will come and bow down to you in worship
because you have shown that you have judged everyone in the right way."

5 Then, after that, I saw that the doors of the temple in heaven were open. That heavenly temple was like the tent on earth that had held the sacred chest. 6 The seven angels whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways came out of the temple. The angels were wearing clean, white linen garments. They were also wearing bands of golden fabric around their chests. 7 One of the four living creatures gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl. Inside each bowl was a different kind of punishment for people who had done wrong. The angels would administer these punishments on behalf of God, who lives forever and ever. 8 Then smoke that expressed the presence of the glorious and all-powerful God filled the temple. **The smoke remained there while the angels were administering the plagues.** Only after the seven angels finished punishing the people of the earth in seven different ways could anyone enter the temple again.

16 1 Next I heard someone in the temple speak in a loud voice to the angels who had the seven bowls. He told them, “Go from here and pour out what you have in your seven bowls onto the earth. This is how God will punish people for their sins.” 2 So the first angel went and poured out what he had in his bowl onto the earth. As a result, terrible sores broke out on the people who had allowed the beast’s servants to write the beast’s name on them. These were the people who had worshiped the beast’s image. 3 Then the second angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the ocean. As a result, the water of the sea turned into blood. That blood was decayed and stinky like the blood of a dead person. Every creature that lived in the ocean died. 4 Then the third angel poured out what he had in his bowl upon the earth’s rivers and springs. As a result, the water in them turned into blood. 5 Then I heard the angel who was in charge of those waters say to God, “O God, you exist and have always existed. You are supremely holy. You are a fair judge of people. 6 The people who rebelled against you murdered your holy people and the prophets. So you are just in punishing them by giving them blood to drink.” 7 Then I heard the altar answer, “Yes, Lord God, you who rule over everything, you punish people completely fairly.” 8 Then the fourth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the sun. As a result, the sun became so hot that it burned people very badly. 9 Because the sun burned people so badly, they said evil things about God because he had the power to punish them in these ways. But they still refused to stop doing wrong things and they still refused to praise him.

10 Then the fifth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the throne of the beast. As a result, it became dark where the beast ruled. **Because it was like night all the time, the people whom the beast ruled could feel the pain of their terrible sores even more.** So they were biting their tongues because of this pain. 11 They also said evil things about God who rules in heaven because their sores were so painful. But they refused to stop doing wrong things. 12 Then the sixth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the Euphrates River. As a result, the water in the river dried up so that the rulers from the eastern countries could cross it with their armies. 13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs. One came out of the mouth of the dragon. One came out of the mouth of the beast. And one came out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 Now those spirits were demons that were able to do miracles. They went out to the rulers of the entire earth to gather their armies. Those armies will fight a battle on the

important day when Almighty God punishes his enemies. **15** (I heard the Lord Jesus say, “You must listen carefully to me: I am coming unexpectedly, like a thief. It will be good for people who stay alert and keep on living in the right way. They will not feel shame when I return. They will be just like a person who keeps his clothes on so that he does not feel shame in front of other people.”) **16** The evil spirits gathered the rulers at a place whose name in the Hebrew language is Armageddon.

17 Then the seventh angel poured what he had in his bowl into the air. As a result, someone said with a loud voice from the throne in the temple, “God has now finished punishing rebellious people.” **18** Then lightning flashed, thunder rumbled, and the earth shook violently. There had not been such a powerful earthquake during the whole time that people have lived on the earth. **19** As a result of this earthquake, the giant city split into three parts. God also destroyed the cities in the other nations. God did not forget that the people of Babylon had sinned very much. So he made them experience the punishments they so justly deserved. **20** Also as a result of the earthquake, every island disappeared, and the mountains became flat land. **21** Then huge hailstones, each weighing 33 kilograms, fell from the sky onto people. Then people said evil things about God because he had punished them in this terrible way with those huge, heavy hailstones.

17 **1** One of the seven angels who had the bowls came over to me. He said, “Come with me. I want to show you how God will punish the evil prostitute whom you saw sitting near a great river. **2** The kings of the earth have worshiped the idols she wanted them to worship. The people they rule have also worshiped those idols. It was as if they had gotten drunk on wine that she gave them.”

3 Then the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. The angel carried me away to a desolate area. There I saw a woman who was riding on a red beast. The beast had written names all over itself. They were names that insulted God. The beast had seven heads and ten horns. **4** Now the woman was wearing purple and red clothes. She had gold jewelry with precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand. That cup was full of something to drink that stands for the awful things she does when she commits sexual immorality. **5** And there was a name in writing on her forehead. The name had a secret meaning. That name was: The Great Babylon, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Immoral

Things in the World. **6** I saw that the woman had become drunk because she had drunk the blood of God's people. Those people had suffered for proclaiming the truth about Jesus. When I saw her, that astonished me completely.

7 The angel said to me, "This should not astonish you. I will explain to you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast on which she rides. That beast has seven heads and ten horns. **8** The beast that you saw lived previously. Now he is no longer alive. But he is about to come back up from the deep, dark pit. Eventually God will destroy him. But this beast will appear again after having lived previously and then dying. Seeing him will astonish the people on the earth whose names God did not write in the Book of Life before he created the world. **9** People need to think wisely to understand this: The seven heads of the beast that the woman is riding represent seven hills. Those are the seven hills of the city that the woman represents. The heads also represent seven rulers. **10** Five of those rulers have died. One is still alive. The seventh ruler has not yet come. And when he comes, he will rule for only a short time. **11** The beast that lived previously and then was not alive will be an eighth ruler. He is actually one of those seven rulers. God will certainly destroy him. **12** Now the ten horns that you saw represent ten rulers who have not yet begun to rule. But they will rule people together with the beast, though only for a short time. **13** Those rulers will all agree to do the same thing. As a result, they will give the beast their power to rule. **14** The rulers and the beast will fight against the Lamb. He will defeat them because he is the Lord who rules over all other lords and the King who rules over all other kings. The people who are with him are the ones whom God has chosen and called to himself and who keep serving him faithfully." **15** Then the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw in the city where the prostitute sits represent a large number of people from many different backgrounds. **16** And the ten horns that you saw represent rulers. They and the beast will hate the prostitute. So they will plunder the city and leave nothing in it. Then they will destroy the city the way a wild animal devours another animal. They will burn down the city completely. **17** They will do that because God has caused them to decide to do what he wants them to do. As a result, they will all agree together to let the beast have their power to rule until God has accomplished what he said. **18** And the prostitute that you saw represents the very evil city whose leaders rule over the other rulers in the world."

18 1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. God had given great
authority to this angel. The angel was shining so brightly that he lit up the earth. 2 The angel
shouted very loudly, “God is about to destroy the evil city of Babylon completely. People will
no longer live in the ruins of the city. All kinds of evil spirits will live there. All kinds of
disgusting scavenger birds will also live there. 3 God is going to destroy Babylon because that
evil city influenced many people groups to devote themselves to idol worship. Babylon
influenced the rulers of those groups, and they made their people worship idols. Babylon also
set an example of living in luxury. This made people in other places want to live in the same
way. Those who sold luxury goods made a lot of money selling the goods to those people.”

4 Then I heard someone else speak from heaven. He said, “My people, run away from that
evil city of Babylon! If you stay there, you may sin as the people there do. And if you sin as
they do, I will punish you in the same way that I will punish them. 5 Run away because the
people of that evil city have sinned very greatly and God is now going to punish them for what
they have done.”

6 The voice from heaven told the angels whom God had assigned to punish Babylon, “Punish
the people of that city just as much as they harmed other people. In fact, cause them to suffer
twice as much as they caused other people to suffer. 7 The people of the city of Babylon
honored themselves. They indulged in pleasures. To the same extent that they did that, torment
them and cause them to grieve. Do that because they were confident that they would always
rule other people. They were confident that they could provide themselves with everything
they needed. They were confident that nothing bad would ever happen to them. 8 Because the
people of Babylon are so wicked, terrible things will happen to them all at once. Some will die
and others will mourn for them. People will be hungry because they will have no food. The
city will burn up completely. The Lord God is able to punish her in these ways because he is
mighty.”

9 The rulers of the peoples who live on earth worshiped idols with the people of Babylon.
They indulged in pleasures with the people of Babylon. So they will mourn greatly for the city
when they see it burning up. 10 Those rulers will stand far away from Babylon because they
will be afraid that God will punish them too if they get too close. They will say, “How very
terrible it is for the Great Babylon, that strong city! God is punishing the people who live there

so quickly!” **11** And the merchants of the earth will mourn greatly for the city because no one
living there will ever again buy the things that they have to sell. **12-13** They sell ornaments
made of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. They sell expensive cloth made of fine linen
and silk, expensive cloth that is dyed purple and crimson. They sell many kinds of scented
wood and many kinds of items made of ivory, the most expensive wood, bronze, iron, and
marble. They sell cinnamon, spices, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour,
and grain. They sell cattle, sheep, horses, and chariots. They even sell human beings as slaves.
14 Yes, the good things the people of Babylon longed to have are gone! God has punished
them by destroying their many valuable possessions! They have lost those possessions
permanently. **15** Many merchants earned a lot of money by selling these things. Those
merchants will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that God will punish
them too if they get too close. They will mourn greatly **16** and they will say, “Very terrible
things have happened to that great city! That city was like a woman who dressed in clothes
made of fine linen and expensive cloth dyed purple and crimson and who wore gold jewelry
with precious stones and pearls. **17** But God has destroyed all these expensive things so
quickly!”

Every ship captain, every ship passenger, all sailors, and all others who do work involving
the ocean will stand far away from the city. **18** When they see the smoke of the fire that is
burning there, they will shout, “No other city has ever been like that great city!” **19** They will
even throw dust on their heads **to show that they are sad**. Then they will shout in great distress,
“Very terrible things have happened to Babylon. The people who lived in that city bought
many expensive things, so that people who owned ships earned a lot of money by transporting
those things there. God has destroyed that city so quickly!”

20 Then someone spoke from heaven saying, “You who live in heaven, rejoice over what
has happened to Babylon! You who are God’s people, including you apostles and prophets,
rejoice because God has justly punished the people of that city because they harmed you so
badly!”

21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large stone for grinding grain and
he threw it into the ocean. Then he said, “God will destroy the great city of Babylon abruptly!
It will disappear completely, just as that stone disappeared into the ocean! Babylon will be
gone forever! **22** In that city there will never again be anyone playing harps, singing, playing

flutes, or blowing trumpets. There will no longer be any skilled workers making things. There will never again be people grinding grain at the mills. **23** No lamp will ever again shine there. There will never again be the happy voices of any bridegroom and his bride. God will destroy this city because its merchants were the most important people in the world. They were so prosperous because it was as if the city used witchcraft to get every people group to live as its people did. **24** The city is also guilty of killing the prophets and others of God's people. Indeed, **because it used violence and set an example of violence,** it is guilty of every murder that people committed on the earth!"

19 **1** Next I heard what sounded like a huge crowd in heaven. They were shouting,

"Hallelujah! God has saved us!
Our God is glorious and mighty!
2 Praise him because he judges completely fairly!
He has punished the evil city that was like a prostitute, because the people of that city persuaded many other people to act immorally as they did.
Praise him because he has punished them for murdering his servants!"

3 The crowd shouted again, saying,

"Hallelujah! The smoke of the fire that is burning that city will go up forever!"
4 Then the 24 elders and the four living creatures prostrated themselves and worshiped God, who sits on the throne. They said:
"It is true! Hallelujah!"

5 Then someone spoke from the throne and said,

"All of you who are his servants, praise our God!
All of you who honor him, praise him, every one of you!"

6 Then I heard something like the noise of a huge crowd of people. They were making a loud sound like the sound of a huge waterfall or loud claps of thunder. They were shouting,

"Hallelujah! Our Lord God, who rules over everything, reigns!
7 We should truly celebrate, and we should honor him

because now is the time for the Lamb to be united with the woman he is marrying. She has dressed for the wedding.

8 God has given her clean white clothes to wear. They are fine-linen clothes."

(That fabric represents the right things that God's people do.)

9 Then the angel said to me, "Write how fortunate the people are whom God invites to the feast when the Lamb marries his wife!" He also said to me, "God has said this, and it is true!" **10** Immediately I prostrated myself in front of the angel to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just your fellow servant and the fellow servant of other believers who speak the truth about Jesus. God has sent me here to serve you by helping you understand the prophetic vision he has given you because you want to speak the truth about Jesus. God is the one you should worship!"

11 Then I saw the heavens open up, and I saw something amazing: Jesus riding on a white horse! Those who truly know Jesus call him Always Trustworthy. He judges all people according to what is right, and he fights against people who do what is wrong. **12** Now his eyes shone like a burning flame. He wore many royal crowns on his head. There was a name on his clothing. Only he knows what that name means. **13** Blood covered the cloak that he was wearing. Another of his names is the Word of God. **14** The heavenly armies were following him. They were riding on white horses. They were wearing clean, white linen clothes. **15** Jesus had a sharp sword extending from his mouth. He will use it to defeat the rebellious people groups. He himself will rule them so powerfully that no one will be able to resist him. He will destroy his enemies as if they were grapes that he was crushing in a winepress. He will do this for God, who rules over everything and will punish his enemies thoroughly because of their sins. **16** A title appeared on his cloak at his thigh: "This is the King who rules over all other kings and the Lord who rules over all other lords."

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the light of the sun. He called loudly to all the flesh-eating birds flying high in the sky, "Come and gather for the large feast that God is providing for you! **18** Come and eat the flesh of God's enemies who will die in this battle! Eat the flesh of kings, of army commanders, of people who fought powerfully, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of many other kinds of people." **19** Then I saw the beast and the kings of earth with their armies. They had gathered together to fight against the rider on the horse and his

army. **20** But the rider on the white horse captured the beast and the false prophet. The false prophet is the one who had performed miracles in the beast's presence. By doing that he had deceived the people who had accepted the beast's mark on their foreheads and who had worshiped its image. Then God threw the beast and the false prophet alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. **21** And the rider on the horse killed the rest of their armies with his sword, the one that extended from his mouth. Birds came and ate as much as they wanted of the flesh of the people and horses that he had killed.

20 **1** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the deep, dark pit and he was carrying a large chain in his hand. **2** The angel seized the dragon. That dragon is the ancient serpent—the devil, that is, Satan. The angel bound him with the chain. That chain would hold him for a thousand years. **3** The angel threw him into the deep, dark pit. He shut the door of the pit, locked it, and sealed it to prevent anyone from opening it. He did this so that Satan would no longer deceive the many people groups until after those thousand years. At that time, God will release Satan for a short time.

4 Then I saw thrones on which people were sitting. God made those people judges. I also saw the souls of other people whose enemies had killed them by cutting their heads off. Their enemies did that because they had spoken the truth from God about Jesus. I also saw the souls of other people whose enemies had not killed them but who had refused to worship the beast or its image. They had not allowed the beast's servants to put the beast's mark on them, either on their foreheads or on their hands. They all became alive again and they ruled with the Messiah during those thousand years. **5** These were the people who lived again the first time that God caused dead people to live again. The rest of the people who had died did not live again until after those thousand years. **6** God will be pleased with those who live again this first time. Yes, God will consider them to belong to him in a special way. They will not die a second time. Instead, they will be priests who serve God and the Messiah. They will rule with the Messiah during those thousand years.

7 At the end of the thousand years, God will release Satan from the deep, dark pit. **8** Satan will go out to deceive the rebellious people groups all over the earth. **These are the nations that the prophet Ezekiel called** Gog and Magog. Satan will gather them to fight against God's people. There will be so many of them fighting against God's people that no one will be able to

count them, just as no one can count the grains of sand on the ocean shore. 9 They will march from many places on the earth. They will surround the army of God's people where it is in battle formation. That will be at Jerusalem, the city that God loves. But God will send fire down from heaven and it will burn up all of his enemies. 10 Then God will throw the devil, who had deceived those people, into the lake of burning sulfur. This is also where God had thrown the beast and the false prophet. As a result, they will continually suffer severely forever.

11 Then I saw a huge white throne on which God was sitting. He was so fearsome that the land and the sky disappeared completely when he appeared. 12 Then I saw people of all kinds who had died but who were now alive again standing in front of God's throne. God opened the books in which he records what people do. God also opened another book, the Book of Life. God writes in that book the names of people who have eternal life. God judged the people who had died and who were now alive again according to what they had done, which he had recorded in the books. 13 The people whose bodies were in the sea became alive again, and the people whose bodies were in graves on the land also became alive again. They all stood in front of God's throne, and God judged each of them according to what each one had done. 14 Then God took the place where souls went after dying physically and threw that place itself into the burning lake. The burning lake is where people go when they die spiritually. 15 Then God saw whose names he had written in the book that lists the people who have eternal life. If someone's name was not in that book, God threw him into the burning lake.

21 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the oceans no longer existed. 2 I saw the city of Jerusalem, which is special to God, in a new form. It was coming down to earth from God in heaven. The city looked very beautiful, like a bride on her wedding day. 3 Then I heard a loud voice calling out from the throne of God. The voice said, "Listen to this! Now God will live right where people live! They will belong to him, and God himself will stay with them. 4 He will comfort them so that they are no longer sad. None of them will ever again die or mourn or cry or suffer pain. God has taken away those things, so they are gone forever."

5 Then God said from the throne, "Listen to this! I am now making everything new!" He also said to me, "Write these things that I have told you. You can be confident that I will

certainly cause them to happen.” **6** He also said to me, “I have completed all these things! I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. To everyone who wants it, I will freely give everlasting life, as if I were giving them a drink from a spring whose water keeps people alive. **7** I will give this to all who are victorious over Satan. And I will be their God, and they will be my children. **8** But all the others will suffer in the lake of burning sulfur. That is what it means to die a second time. Those who are cowards will suffer this way. So will those who do not believe in me, those who do detestable things, those who murder people, those who sin sexually, those who practice witchcraft, those who worship idols, and all those who tell lies.”

9 Then an angel came to me. He was one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of the wine that caused the seven last ways of suffering. He said to me, “Come with me. I will show you the people who will live together with the Lamb forever!”

10 Then the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. The angel took me to the top of a very high mountain. There he showed me the city that is special to God, the new Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. **11** The city was shining with brilliant light that came from God himself. It was sparkling like a priceless jasper gemstone, and it was clear like crystal. **12** A very high wall surrounded the city. The wall had twelve gates. An angel stood at each gate. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel appeared over the gates. Each gate had the name of one tribe. **13** Three gates were on the east side of the city. Three gates were on the north side. Three gates were on the south side. And three gates were on the west side. **14** The city wall had twelve foundation stones. On each foundation stone was the name of one of the twelve apostles whom the Lamb had appointed.

15 The angel who was speaking to me carried a golden measuring rod. He used it to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. **16** The city was square in shape, that is, it was as long as it was wide. After the angel measured the city with his rod, he reported that it was 2,200 kilometers long and that its width and height were the same as its length. **17** He measured its wall and reported that it was 66 meters high. The angel used the measurement that people normally use.

18 The stones of the city wall were like the green stone that people call jasper. The buildings of the city were pure gold and they showed reflections the way clear glass does.

19 The foundations of the city wall were beautiful precious stones. Each foundation was a different stone. The first foundation stone was jasper. The second foundation stone was sapphire. The third foundation stone was chalcedony. The fourth foundation stone was emerald. 20 The fifth foundation stone was sardonyx. The sixth foundation stone was carnelian. The seventh foundation stone was chrysolite. The eighth foundation stone was beryl. The ninth foundation stone was topaz. The tenth foundation stone was chrysoprase. The eleventh foundation stone was jacinth. And the twelfth foundation stone was amethyst. 21 The twelve gates of the city were each huge pearls. Each gate was a single pearl. The city streets were pure gold and they showed reflections the way clear glass does.

22 There was no temple in the city. That was because the Lord God himself, who rules over all, and the Lamb were there. So there was no need for a temple. 23 Now the city will not need the sun or the moon for light, because the light coming from God and from the Lamb will be all the light that it needs. 24 The way people live in the city will be an example to all of the world's people groups. The rulers of the earth will bring their treasures into the city to honor God and the lamb. 25 It will never be night in the city. So no one will ever shut the gates of the city as one usually does at the end of a day. 26 The people of the world will also bring their wealth into the city. 27 But nothing that is morally impure will ever enter that city. No one who does things that God considers detestable and no one who tells lies will ever enter it. Only those people whose names God has written in the book that belongs to the Lamb will be there. That is the book that lists the names of people who have everlasting life.

22 1 Then the angel showed me the river that causes people who drink from it to live forever. The water was sparkling and clear like crystal. The river was flowing out from the thrones where God and the Lamb were sitting. 2 It flowed down through the middle of the city's open area. On each side of the river was a tree with fruit that causes people who eat it to live forever. These trees produce fruit 12 times a year. They produce a crop each month. The people groups use the leaves of the trees as medicine. 3 There will never be anyone or anything there that God will curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will worship him there. 4 They will see him face to face, and his name will appear on their foreheads. 5 There will never again be night. God's servants will not need the

light of a lamp or the light of the sun because the Lord God will shine his light upon them. They will rule forever.

6 The angel said to me: “These things that God has shown you are true, and he will certainly make them happen. The Lord God who inspires the prophets sent his angel to show the people who serve him the events that must happen soon.” **7** Jesus says to all his people, “Listen to this! I am coming soon; God will abundantly bless everyone who obeys the prophetic message in this book.”

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw in a vision these things that I have written down. When I had heard and seen them, I immediately lay down in front of the angel who had shown me these things in order to worship him. **9** But he said to me, “Do not worship me! I am just a servant of God like you! I am also a servant like your fellow believers who are the prophets, and like those who obey the message in this book. Instead, worship God!” **10** He also said to me, “Do not keep secret the message about what God has foretold in this book, because it is almost time for him to fulfill this message. **11** Since that time is near, if those who act in an evil manner want to continue to act that way, let them continue to do so. If those who are vile want to continue to be vile, let them continue to do so. God will soon punish them for that. But those who are acting righteously should continue to act righteously. Those who are acting as people should who belong to God should continue to act that way.”

12 Jesus says to all people: “Listen! I am coming soon! And I will punish or reward everyone according to what each one has done. **13** I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. I am before all things and I am at the end of all things. **14** God is very pleased with the people who stop living in wrong ways and start living in right ways. Because they do that, those people will be able to eat the fruit of the tree that enables people to live forever. They will be able to go through the gates into the holy city. **15** But others will not enter that city. This includes people who do wicked things, practice witchcraft, sin sexually, murder others, worship idols, or lie continually.

16 I, Jesus, sent my angel to announce these things that will affect you groups of believers. Mysteriously, I am both the ancestor of King David and his descendant whom the prophets promised would come. I am the one who is like the bright morning star.”

17 The Holy Spirit and the people who belong to God say, “Come!” Whoever hears this should also say, “Come!” Everyone who wants everlasting life should receive it! God will give everlasting life as a free gift to everyone who desires it!

18 I, John, solemnly warn everyone who hears the message about what I have foretold in this book: If anyone adds anything to this message, God will punish him in the ways that this book tells about. **19** And if anyone takes away any of the message about the things I have foretold in this book, God will take away that person’s right to eat fruit from the tree that enables people to live forever. God will also take away that person’s right to enter the new Jerusalem. I describe both these things in this book.

20 Jesus, who says that all these things are true, says, “Certainly I am coming soon!” I, John, reply, “May it be so! Lord Jesus, come!”

21 I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly to all of you who are God’s people. May it be so!