

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

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First Samuel

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First Samuel

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 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.
So do not speak so arrogantly! 4 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.
People do not defeat their enemies by their own
strength. 10 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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.