

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

v92

Second Samuel

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2 Samuel

1 After they defeated the Amalekites, David and the men
who were with him returned to the city of Ziklag. By that
time, the Philistines had already killed Saul. David and his
men stayed there that day and the next one *without receiving
any news of the battle between the Philistines and Israelites*.
2 But on the day after that, a young man unexpectedly arrived
there who had been in the camp where Saul's soldiers had
set up their tents. He had torn his clothes and put dust on
his head to show that he was grieving. He came to David
and knelt down and lay flat on the ground *to show respect
for him*.
3 David asked him, "Where have you come from?" The
man replied, "I have fled here from the camp where the
Israelite soldiers set up their tents."
4 David asked him, "What happened? Please tell me about
the battle!" The man replied, "The Philistines defeated our
army so badly that our soldiers ran away. The Philistines
killed many of them. They even killed King Saul and his son
Jonathan."
5 David asked the young man who told him this, "How
do you know that the Philistines killed Saul and Jonathan?"
6 The young man replied, "As it happened, I was on
Mount Gilboa *where the Israelites had fled from the Philistines*.
I saw Saul. *He was wounded and* leaning on his spear *for
support*. I noticed that the Philistine chariot drivers and the
commanders of their soldiers on horseback *had seen him,
and they all* were rushing toward him. 7 Saul turned around
and saw me, and he called out to me. I called back, 'What
do you want me to do?'
8 He asked me, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am an Amalekite.'
9 Then he said to me, 'I can no longer fight, because I am
in such pain from my many wounds. But those wounds will
not kill me. So please use one of the weapons here to kill
me yourself.'
10 I knew that the Philistines would soon come and kill
him, so he was not going to live anyway. So I used one of
the weapons there to kill him. Then I took the crown he had
been wearing and his armband. Here they are for you to see,
sir."
11 Then David took hold of his clothing and ripped it *to
show how sad he was* All the men who were with him ripped
their clothes as well. 12 They felt very sad, and they cried.
They did not eat anything for the rest of that day. This was
to honor and remember Saul and his son Jonathan and all
of the Israelite soldiers whom the Philistines had killed in
the battle. They were also very sorry for all of the Israelite
people*, who had lost their king and many of their men and
much of their territory*.
13 But then David asked the young man who had told him
about the battle, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I
come from an Amalekite family, but we are living here in
Israel."
14 David told him, "You should have respected Saul as
the man whom Yahweh chose to be the king of Israel and
not dared to kill him!" 15 Then David summoned one of his
soldiers and told him, "Come over here and kill this man!"
So the soldier came over and killed him. 16 David said to
the Amalekite, "You yourself said, 'I killed the man whom
Yahweh appointed to be the king.' So you admitted that you
were guilty and deserved to die!" 17 Then David composed
a sad song about Saul and Jonathan. 18 He called this song
"The Bow." *When David became the king of Judah shortly
afterward,* he told his officials to teach this song to the people
of Judah. You can find the words in the Book of Jashar*.
These are the words to the song*:

19 "You Israelite people, the Philistines have pursued
your great warriors even onto the
mountains and killed them there!
It is very sad that these strong soldiers have died!
20 Do not let anyone who lives in cities such as Gath and
Ashkelon find out about this!
Otherwise, the women among the pagan Philistines
will have victory celebrations.
21 The shield of Saul, that mighty king, remains on
the ground on Mount Gilboa.
No one is caring for it by rubbing it with olive oil.
So I hope there will never be rain or dew there again
so that the shield does not rust.
I hope that there is so little rain that the fields do
not even produce the small amount of grain
that someone would bring as an offering.
22 When Jonathan shot arrows from his bow at
enemy soldiers, the arrows struck them
so that they bled and died.
When Saul stabbed strong men with his sword, he
wounded them so deeply that they died.
23 People loved Saul and Jonathan. They delighted many
people during their lives. And they died
fighting together against their enemies.
They were warriors who could run fast, as eagles fly
fast, and who were strong, as lions are strong.
24 You women in Israel should mourn for Saul.
He made Israel a safe and prosperous place
in which you had beautiful scarlet
clothes and expensive jewelry and
gold ornaments to wear.
25 It is very sad that Jonathan, that strong soldier,
has died while fighting a war!
The Philistines pursued him even onto a
mountain and killed him there.
26 Jonathan, my dear friend, I grieve for you.
You were very dear to me.
You loved me in a wonderful way. It was much
better than the fleeting feelings of romance
that men and women have for each other.
27 It is very sad that these strong soldiers have died.
Saul and Jonathan are not using their sword
and bow anymore."

2 Sometime after that, David asked Yahweh, "Should I
return to Judah and live in one of the cities there?"
Yahweh replied, "Yes, return to Judah." Then David asked,
"To which city should I go?" Yahweh replied, "You should
go to Hebron."
2 So David went to Hebron. He brought his two wives with
him. They were Ahinoam, who was from the city of Jezreel,
and Abigail, who was from the city of Carmel. She had been
married to Nabal before he died. 3 David also brought the
men who had been with him, together with their families.

They all settled in the city of Hebron and in the surrounding towns and villages. 4 Then the men who were the leaders of the tribe of Judah came to Hebron. One of them poured olive oil on David's head to show they were appointing him to be the king of the tribe of Judah. Someone told David how soldiers from the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead had recaptured Saul's body *from the wall of Beth Shan* and how the people of that city had buried his body honorably.

5 So David sent messengers to the people who lived in that city. He told the messengers to tell them, "I hope that Yahweh will do good things for you because you buried Saul's body honorably. By doing that, you treated Saul with the loyalty that he deserved as your king. 6 So this is what I hope will happen. I hope that Yahweh will be just as loyal to you all the time. And I will personally do good things for you because of the good way you treated Saul. 7 Now this is what I hope you will do. Even though Saul, who was your king, has died, do not become discouraged. Instead, continue to fight bravely against the Philistines. The people of the tribe of Judah have appointed me to be their king*, and I will lead their army to come and help you as soon as I can*."

8 But instead, Abner son of Ner, who had been Saul's army commander, brought Ish Bosheth son of Saul across the Jordan River to the city of Mahanaim. 9 So that Ish Bosheth could rule over it, Abner steadily reconquered the territory that the Philistines had captured from the Israelites. Ish Bosheth first ruled the region of Gilead east of the Jordan River, which the Philistines had not captured. Abner then reconquered the territory west of the Jordan River and north of the Valley of Jezreel, where the people of tribes such as Asher lived. Abner then reconquered the Valley of Jezreel itself. He then reconquered the territory west of the Jordan River and south of the Valley of Jezreel, where the people of tribes such as Ephraim lived. Abner was able to reconquer that territory all the way south to the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. That made Ish Bosheth the king of all the territory that would later be the northern kingdom of Israel*after it divided from the southern kingdom of Judah*.

10 Ish Bosheth son of Saul was 40 years old when he started to rule over the Israelite people. He ruled them for two years. But David was the king of the people of the tribe of Judah. 11 David ruled them for seven and a half years while he was living in Hebron.

12 One day Abner son of Ner led some soldiers from the army of Ish Bosheth son of Saul across the Jordan River from Mahanaim to the city of Gibeon. 13 Joab son of Zeruiah led a group of David's soldiers from Hebron to Gibeon. They found Abner and his soldiers near the large pool of water there. Joab had his soldiers stay on one side of the pool and sit down. Abner had his soldiers sit down on the other side.

14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Let us have some of our soldiers fight each other while the rest of us watch!" Joab replied, "Yes, let us do that!"

15 So Abner chose 12 men from his own tribe of Benjamin to fight on behalf of Ish Bosheth son of Saul. They went over to the other side of the pool and fought against 12 soldiers whom Joab chose to fight on behalf of David. 16 Each soldier grabbed the man he was fighting against by the hair. That enabled him to thrust his dagger into that man's side. The result was that these 24 soldiers all killed each other. That is why people now call the place near Gibeon where they fought Helkath Hazzurim.

17 Then the two whole groups of soldiers started fighting each other. It was a very fierce battle. But as they fought, David's soldiers defeated Abner and the soldiers from the other tribes of Israel.

18 Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, Zeruiah's three sons, were in that battle. Asahel was able to run very fast, the way wild gazelles run very fast. 19 When Abner fled from the battle, Asahel chased him. No matter which way Abner went to try to escape, Asahel kept following him. 20 Abner looked behind him to see who was chasing him. He called out, "Is that you, Asahel?" Asahel answered, "Yes, it is!"

21 Abner shouted back, "Chase somebody else! Try to catch one of the younger soldiers and defeat him and take his armor." But Asahel would not stop chasing Abner.

22 So Abner shouted at him again, "Stop chasing me! Do not make me fight you, because I would kill you. Then I could never again have a peaceful relationship with your brother Joab, because he would want to get revenge against me."

23 But Asahel refused to stop chasing Abner. So Abner let Asahel nearly catch him, then he suddenly stopped and swung the butt end of his spear into Asahel's stomach as he was still running fast toward him. The force was so great that the end of the spear went right through Asahel's stomach and came out his back. Asahel was wounded so badly that he fell down and died right there. When other soldiers came to the place where Asahel's dead body was lying in the roadway, they all stopped and stood there.

24 But when Joab and Abishai saw what had happened, they ran off in pursuit of Abner. At sunset they came to the hill of Ammah, which is near the town of Giah along the road that leads into the desolate area near Gibeon. 25 The soldiers who had come with Abner were from the tribe of Benjamin. He had regrouped them into a line of battle on the top of that hill.

26 Then Abner called out to Joab, "We should not continue this deadly battle any longer! You must realize that if we continue fighting, many people will suffer great harm. We are all Israelites, so please tell your soldiers right now to stop chasing us!"

27 Joab replied, "Even if you had not said that, I would certainly have told my soldiers tonight to stop chasing their fellow Israelites. I swear by God that this is true."

28 Then Joab blew a long, loud note on a ram's horn to signal that his soldiers should stop fighting. So all his men stopped where they were and no longer pursued the soldiers from the other tribes of Israel. That was the end of that battle.

29 That night Abner led his soldiers back through the Jordan River valley. They crossed the river and marched all the next morning. Then they finally arrived back at Mahanaim.

30 After his soldiers stopped chasing Abner, Joab gathered them all together. He counted them, and he found out that besides Asahel, 19 of them had died in the battle. 31 But David's soldiers had killed 360 soldiers from the tribe of Benjamin and among the soldiers from other tribes who had come to Gibeon with Abner. 32 Some of Joab's soldiers carried Asahel's body from the battlefield to the town of Bethlehem and buried it in the same tomb where people had buried his father. Then Joab and his soldiers marched all through the night, and at dawn they arrived back home at Hebron.

3 After that, the people who wanted Saul's son to be the
next king fought a long war against those who wanted
David to be the king. As the war continued, more people
began to support David, while fewer people supported Saul's
son. 2 After David moved to Hebron, his wives gave birth to
sons. The oldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam
from the city of Jezreel. 3 The next son was Chileab, whose
mother was Abigail, the widow of Nabal, from the city
of Carmel. The next son was Absalom, whose mother was
Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, the king of the region of
Geshur. 4 The next son was Adonijah, whose mother was
Haggith. The next son was Shephatiah, whose mother was
Abital. 5 The youngest son was Ithream, whose mother was
Eglah, another one of David's wives. Their mothers all gave
birth to these sons of David in Hebron.

6 During the war between those who wanted Saul's son to
be the next king and those who wanted David to be the king,
Abner became a powerful leader among those who wanted
Saul's son to be the king. 7 Saul had a secondary wife whose
name was Rizpah. Aiah was her father. One day Ishbosheth
accused Abner of having sexual relations with her.

8 Abner became very angry about what Ish Bosheth said
to him. He said to Ish Bosheth, "I am not some disloyal
person from the tribe of Judah! From the beginning I have
been loyal to Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his
friends. And I have kept David's army from defeating you.
So you should not be accusing me now of doing something
wrong with this woman! 9–10 Yahweh solemnly promised
David that he would make him the next king instead of
one of Saul's descendants. He promised to make David the
ruler not just of the tribe of Judah but also of all the other
tribes of Israel. He promised that David would rule all the
territory extending from the city of Dan far in the north to
the city of Beersheba far in the south. I am going to make
that happen! If I do not, may God take away my position and
my possessions and do even worse things to me." 11 What
Abner said made Ishbosheth so afraid of him that he could
not say anything to him in reply.

12 Then Abner sent some of his men to David at Hebron
with this message: "I am the most powerful leader among
the other tribes of Israel. So if you make an agreement with
me, then I can help you. I will make all the people of Israel
want you to be their king." 13 David told the messengers to
tell Abner. "All right, I am willing to make an agreement
with you. But there is one thing you must do. Otherwise, I
will not meet with you so that we can make that agreement
in person. When you come to meet with me, you must bring
my wife Michal, Saul's daughter, to me." 14 *Abner agreed to
get Michal for David.* So David sent messengers to Ish Bosheth
to tell him, "I killed 100 Philistine soldiers and cut off their
foreskins to give to Saul to pay for Michal to be my wife. So
now, give her back to me!"

15 Saul had taken Michal away from David and given her
to Paltiel son of Laish. But Ish Bosheth sent some men to
take Michal away from Paltiel. 16 But when they took her,
Paltiel followed her, crying as he went along. But when they
reached the city of Bahurim, Abner told him, "You must go
back home!" So he did.

17 *Before going to see David,* Abner had sent messengers to
the Israelite leaders to tell them, "I know that for a long time
you have wanted David to be your king. 18 So this is what
you should do. Make him your king now. Keep in mind that
Yahweh spoke of David as someone who served him well.
Remember that he said he would use David to rescue us
Israelites, his people, from the Philistines and all the other
enemies who would oppress us." 19 Abner had also spoken
personally with the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin*, to which
Saul had belonged*. The people of that tribe and of all the
other Israelite tribes had agreed to make David their king.
So Abner went to Hebron to tell David that personally.

20 Abner respectfully brought 20 of his soldiers with him
when he went to see David at Hebron. David served a feast
to all of them. 21 After they had eaten, Abner said to David,
"Sir, I know that you have wanted to be the king of all the
Israelites. Let me now go and get leaders from all the tribes
of Israel and bring them here so they can make an agreement
with you to be their king." David agreed, and he allowed
Abner and his men to leave safely.

22 While Abner was visiting with David, Joab was leading
David's soldiers to attack some of their enemies. They defeated
those enemies and captured many valuable possessions. When
they brought what they had captured back to Hebron, Abner
was no longer there, since David had already sent him away
safely. 23 When Joab and the soldiers who were with him
arrived, someone told Joab that Abner had come there and
talked with the king and that the king had allowed Abner to
leave safely.

24 So Joab went to the king and said, "You should not have
done that! Listen to me! You had Abner, the commander
of your enemy's army, right here where you could have
made him your prisoner. But instead, you allowed him to
leave, and now he has gotten away! 25 You know what kind
of person Abner son of Ner is! He only pretended that he
wanted to make an agreement with you. He really wanted
to find out how you lead your armies and what plans you
were making!"

26 Then Joab left David and sent some messengers to get
Abner. They found him at the cistern of Sirah and brought
him back to Hebron. David did not know that they had done
this. 27 When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab pretended he
wanted to speak with him privately. He led him into the
shaded area between the inner and outer gate in the city
wall. But there he stabbed Abner in the stomach and killed
him. Joab did that to get revenge against Abner for killing
his brother Asahel.

28 David later found out what had happened. He said,
"I was not involved in any way in the murder of Abner
son of Ner. So may Yahweh never punish me or any of my
descendants who are kings after me for his death. 29 May
Yahweh punish Joab and his relatives instead. I hope that
there will always be someone in his family who has sores or
who is a leper or who cannot walk without a crutch or who
dies in battle or who does not have enough food to eat!"

30 *David cursed Joab in this way because it was not right for*
Joab and his brother Abishai to have murdered Abner. He
had killed their brother Asahel in battle at Gibeon*, so they
should not have taken revenge*.

31 Then David told Joab and all of his soldiers, "I want
you to tear your clothes and wear rough cloth *to show that
you are sad that Abner has died*!" When men carried Abner's
body to his grave in a casket, King David walked right behind
it *to honor him*. 32 They buried Abner's body at Hebron. At
Abner's grave, King David cried loudly, and all the other
people also cried.

33 Then King David sang a sad song about Abner. He sang,
"It was not right for Abner to die like a criminal! 34 No one
tied his hands or put chains on his feet, as they would have
done if he had been guilty of a crime. No, men murdered

him unjustly!" After the other people heard David sing this song for Abner, they cried even more sadly.

35 Later that day some people came and invited David to join in the customary funeral meal. But David refused *since he wanted to go without eating to show how sad he was that Abner had died*. He said, "I swear that I will not even taste any kind of food for the rest of this day *on which we buried Abner*! If I do, I hope that God will make very bad things happen to me." 36 Everyone who was present at the funeral saw what David did, and it pleased them, just as other things that King David had done had pleased the people he ruled.

37 *Because he had mourned deeply and sincerely for Abner,* the people of the tribe of Judah and the people of all the other tribes of Israel realized then that King David had not wanted Joab to kill Abner. 38 King David told his officials, "I hope you realize that a great leader has now died in Israel. 39 Even though Yahweh appointed me to be the king, I now feel weak. These two sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai, are very violent. I cannot control them. So I hope that Yahweh will punish them as they deserve for this wicked thing that they have done!"

4 When Saul's son Ishbosheth heard that Joab had killed Abner at Hebron, he lost his courage. The people of the Israelite tribes he ruled worried greatly about what would happen next. 2 Two of the officers who led groups of soldiers for Ishbosheth were brothers whose names were Baanah and Rechab. Their father was Rimmon. They came from the city of Beeroth. People considered them to be Benjaminites because Beeroth is within the territory that Joshua assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. 3 (But the *original Gibeonite* inhabitants of Beeroth had fled to the town of Gittaim, and they are still staying there now.)

4 Saul's son Jonathan had a son whose name was Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was five years old when Saul and Jonathan died in the battle at Jezreel. When people came to Gibeah and told what had happened, Mephibosheth's nursemaid picked him up and ran away *to escape from the Philistines*. She ran so fast that she dropped him. That injured his legs, so that he could no longer walk well.

5 One day, Rimmon's sons Rechab and Baanah traveled to Ish Bosheth's house. They arrived there at the hottest time of the day. Ish Bosheth was lying on a bed in a cool part of his house where he rested when it was hot. 6–7 Rechab and Baanah acted as if they were going into the house to get some wheat to give to their soldiers. This allowed them to get as far into the house as Ish Bosheth's private bedroom. He was asleep on his bed. They killed him by stabbing him in the stomach with their swords. Then they cut off his head. Rechab and Baanah fled from the house, carrying Ish Bosheth's head. They walked all night through the plain along the Jordan River 8 so they could go to Hebron. When they got there, they presented Ish Bosheth's head to David. They told him, "Here is the head of Ish Bosheth, the son of your enemy Saul, who tried to kill you! Your Majesty, today Yahweh has allowed you to get revenge on Saul and his descendants."

9 But David replied to them, "I swear by Yahweh, who was the one who kept Saul from killing me, that what I am about to say is true. 10 When a messenger came to Ziklag and told me that he had killed Saul, he thought he was bringing news that I would be glad to hear. But instead, I told one of my soldiers to kill him. He expected me to reward him for bringing this news, but I gave him what he really deserved. 11 If I punished him by killing him, I should certainly do the same to you. You two evil men murdered a man who had done nothing wrong, and you killed him while he was sleeping on his bed in his own house! Because you murdered him, it is right for me to punish you by executing you. I am going to remove you completely from the earth!"

12 Then David gave orders to his soldiers, and they killed Rechab and Baanah. They cut off their hands and their feet and hung them near the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ish Bosheth and buried it respectfully in the tomb of Abner, there at Hebron.

5 Then the leaders of all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron. They told him, "Listen, *even though we belong to different tribes,* we are all Israelites. 2 Previously, even though Saul was our king, you were the one who led our soldiers into battle. Yahweh promised you, 'You will be the leader of the Israelite people, who belong to me. You will be their king.'"

3 Then, with Yahweh as their witness, all the leaders of the people of Israel came and made an agreement with David at Hebron that he would be their king. They poured olive oil on his head to show that he was now the king of the Israelites. 4 David was 30 years old when he first became the king of Judah. He was a king for a total of 40 years. 5 In Hebron, he had ruled over the tribe of Judah for seven and a half years. He would then rule over all the people of Judah and Israel for 33 more years in Jerusalem.

6 Once he became king, David led his soldiers to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebusites who lived there. The Jebusites believed that David's army would never be able to capture their fortress in the city. So they called out mockingly to David, "Even our soldiers who have become blind or crippled will be able to keep you from getting inside our city walls!" 7 But David's army did indeed capture the fortress on Mount Zion. (Later David named it the City of David.) 8 On that day, David told his soldiers, "In order to attack the Jebusites, crawl up through the water supply tunnel into the city. That is how you will get to those crippled and blind soldiers who can supposedly defeat us. They are my enemies!" (Because David called them his enemies, people now say that no one who is blind or crippled may enter the royal palace.)

9 After David and his soldiers captured the fortress, David moved into it. That was when he named it the City of David. David had people build more buildings in the area between the fortress and the Millo. 10 David continued to become more and more powerful because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, was helping him.

11 One day Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, sent ambassadors to *make a peace treaty with* David. Hiram agreed to provide cedar trees to make lumber, and he also agreed that he would send carpenters and stone masons to build a palace for David. 12 Because Hiram did these things, David realized that Yahweh truly wanted him to be the king of Israel. He also realized that Yahweh wanted him to be a powerful king so that he could protect the Israelites, since Yahweh had chosen them as his own people.

13 After David moved from Hebron to Jerusalem, he married more women as wives and secondary wives. All of those women gave birth to more sons and daughters of David. 14 The names of his sons whom his wives bore in Jerusalem were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, 15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, 16 Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

17 When the Philistines learned that the Israelites had
made David their king, they assembled their army, and it
marched toward Jerusalem to try to capture David. But David
learned that they were coming, so he left the city and went
to another place where he would be safe. 18 The Philistine
army marched into the Valley of the Raphaites *southwest of
Jerusalem* and set up its battle lines there. 19 David asked
Yahweh, "Should I lead my soldiers to attack the Philistine
army? Will you enable us to defeat them?" Yahweh replied,
"Yes, attack them, because I will definitely enable your army
to defeat them."
20 So David led his army to where the Philistine army was,
and they defeated them there. Then David said, "Yahweh
enabled us to break through the enemy battle lines just as
a flood of water breaks through a dam!" So David named
that place Baal Perazim. 21 The Philistine men left their idols
there, and David and his soldiers took them away.
22 But after that, the Philistine army marched into the
Valley of the Raphaites again and set up its battle lines there
once more. 23 So David asked Yahweh again what he should
do. Yahweh replied, "Do not attack their battle lines directly.
Tell your soldiers to go around them and attack them from
the back. Come through the grove of balsam trees. 24 You
will hear the sound of an army marching in the tops of the
balsam trees. When you do, you will know that I am going
ahead of you to enable your army to defeat the Philistine
army. So when you hear that sound, attack them right away."
25 So David did what Yahweh told him to do. His soldiers
defeated the Philistine soldiers and chased them from the
city of Geba all the way west to the city of Gezer.

6 After this, David assembled all of his best soldiers once
again. There were 30,000 of them. 2 He led them to the
city of Baalah in Judah so that they could bring the sacred
chest from there to Jerusalem. People call that chest "The
Box of Yahweh, the Commander of the Heavenly Armies."
Yahweh himself is invisibly present between the statues of
the winged creatures on top of it. 3 They went to the hilltop
house of Abinadab. They used a new cart to carry the chest
from there. Two oxen were pulling the cart, and Abinadab's
two sons Uzzah and Ahio were guiding them. 4 In order to
bring the sacred chest from Abinadab's hilltop house, Ahio
walked in front of the cart*, while Uzzah walked alongside it*.
5 David and his soldiers and a large crowd of other Israelites
were singing and dancing in Yahweh's presence. People
were playing musical instruments to accompany the singing
and dancing, including wooden instruments, harps, lyres,
tambourines, rattles, and cymbals.
6 But when they came to the place in the area of Nacon
where people threshed grain, the oxen tripped. *Because that
made the cart tilt so that the sacred chest might have fallen off
of it,* Uzzah put his hand on the sacred chest to steady it.
7 Yahweh immediately became very angry with Uzzah for
touching the chest. God killed him right there next to it.
8 David became angry because Yahweh had punished
Uzzah. David called that place Perez Uzzah, and that has
been its name ever since.
9 Then David became afraid of *what else* Yahweh *might do
to punish them*, and he said, "It is too dangerous for me to
try to bring the sacred chest to where I live in Jerusalem!"
10 So David decided not to bring the sacred chest to the City
of David where he lived. Instead, he had the people take
it into a house that was there by the road. A man whose
name was Obed Edom the Gittite lived in that house. 11 The
sacred chest stayed in the house of Obed Edom for the next
three months. During that time, Yahweh made good things
happen for him and his whole family.
12 After that time, people told King David, "Because Obed
Edom is taking care of the sacred chest, Yahweh is making
good things happen for his family and all of his servants!"
When David heard that, he *gathered many of the Levites and*
went to Obed Edom's house. Together they very joyfully
brought the sacred chest from there to the City of David. 13 On
the way, once the Levites who were carrying the sacred chest
had taken their first six steps, David had them stop. Right at
that place, David killed a bull and a fat calf and offered them
to Yahweh as sacrifices. 14 David was wearing just a plain
linen robe. He danced to honor Yahweh, leaping as high
as he could and whirling around fast. 15 David and a large
crowd of Israelites brought the sacred chest to Jerusalem,
shouting loudly and blowing ram's horns.
16 While they were bringing the sacred chest into the
City of David, Michal daughter of Saul*, his wife, was on an
upper floor of her house. She* looked through a window down
onto the street. She saw *her husband* King David leaping and
whirling to honor Yahweh. That made her feel disgusted
with him *because she did not think a king should dress and act
that way*.
17 David had put up a tent for the sacred chest, and
the Levites carried the sacred chest into it and set it up
there. Then David made some offerings to Yahweh that he
completely burned on an altar. He made other offerings
whose meat the people could share at a meal to celebrate
this happy occasion. 18 When David finished offering those
sacrifices, he asked Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly
armies, to do good things for the people. 19 Then he gave
special gifts of food to all the Israelites who had come for
the celebration. To each man and woman he gave a loaf of
bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake. Then they all returned
to their homes.
20 Then David went home to ask Yahweh to do good
things for his family. *His wife* Michal daughter of Saul came
out to meet him. She told him, "As the king of Israel, you
should not have acted so disgracefully today! You took off
almost all of your clothes, and you let the female servants
of your officials see you that way! Only immoral men take
off their clothes in public as you did."
21 David replied to Michal, "I danced in that simple way
in order to honor Yahweh! He chose me instead of your
father or any member of his family to be the king of the
Israelite people, who belong to him. I was celebrating to
honor Yahweh! 22 And so I am willing to act even more
humbly than that. I will do things that seem undignified. But
those female servants you were talking about will respect
me *as a king who serves Yahweh devotedly*!"
23 Michal daughter of Saul did not have children for as
long as she lived.

7 King David was living in his palace, and Yahweh caused
the enemy people groups that surrounded the Israelites
to stop attacking them. 2 So one day David said to the prophet
Nathan, "Consider that I live in a palace that King Hiram's
craftsmen built for me from cedar wood. But the sacred chest
is only in a tent *rather than a splendid temple*!"
3 Then Nathan told King David, "Yahweh will help you,
so you may do what you want to do."
4 But that night, Yahweh *appeared to* Nathan and told
him, 5 "Go and give my servant David this message from

me. He is not the one who will build a temple to hold the
sacred chest on which I am invisibly present. 6 I have not
been especially present in any building from the time when
I brought the Israelites here from Egypt until now. Instead,
I have been present in my sacred tent, moving from one
place to another with the people. 7 I went with the Israelites
wherever they traveled, but I never told any of the leaders
whom I appointed to rule them that they should have built
a temple for me out of cedar wood. 8 So give my servant
David this message from me, Yahweh, the commander of the
heavenly armies. Although he worked out in the fields caring
for his father's sheep, I appointed him to become the king
of my Israelite people. 9 Remind him that I have protected
him wherever he has gone. I have enabled him to defeat all
the enemies who attacked him. Now I will make him very
famous. He will become as famous as the greatest people
who have ever lived on earth. 10–11 When my Israelite people
were slaves in Egypt, violent people oppressed them. They
also oppressed them in this land during the time when I was
appointing judges to lead them. But this will not happen
anymore. I have made a place where my people can live, and
I will enable them to keep living there. They will no longer
be afraid. I will make all their enemies stop attacking them.
Tell David that I promise that I, Yahweh, will enable his
descendants to rule as kings. 12 Tell David that after he has
lived out his life and died, I will appoint one of his own sons
to be king. One of his wives will give birth to this son in the
future. I will make sure that he remains the king. 13 Assure
David that that son of his will build a temple for me. No one
will ever replace him as the king. 14 It will be as if I am his
father and he is my son. When he does something wrong,
I will punish him the way human fathers properly punish
their sons. 15 But I will never stop showing kindness to David
and his descendants the way I stopped showing kindness to
Saul. I made him no longer the king so that David could
become the king. 16 So assure David that his descendants will
continually rule the kingdom of Israel after him. No other
family will ever replace them as the royal family."

17 Nathan went and told David everything that Yahweh
had told him when he appeared to him.

18 *When he heard Nathan's message,* King David went into
the sacred tent and sat in Yahweh's presence. He prayed,
"Yahweh, my master, I am not a very important person,
and I do not come from a very important family. So I do
not deserve any of the things that you have done for me
already. 19 And yet, Yahweh my Lord, you are telling me
that you want to do even more for me. After all, you have
now told me that my descendants will reign over Israel long
into the future! And you have said that you will require
people to obey them as their kings. 20 Yahweh my Lord, I
am not able to say anything further to you. But you know
me so well that you know what I would say if I could say
it. 21 You are going to do a wonderful thing *and make my
descendants kings after me*. You are going to do this because
you promised to make me a king, and because it is what you
really want to do. It was also wonderful for you to tell me
about this now. 22 This shows how great you are, Yahweh
my Lord. We have never heard of any other God besides
you. The gods that the people of other nations worship are
nothing like you. 23 No other nation in the world is like us,
your Israelite people. None of the gods that other people
groups worship rescued them so that those people would
belong to them. You rescued us from being slaves in Egypt.
You also rescued us from enemy nations *here in Canaan* that
thought their gods would enable them to defeat us. You
did miracles to enable us to settle in this land. Because of
the powerful things you have done, people throughout the
world now respect you. 24 You caused us Israelites to be your
people forever, and you, Yahweh, have become our God!
25 Yahweh, my God, you have promised to do wonderful
things for me and my descendants. So please do make those
things you said happen always. 26 When that happens, you
will become famous forever. People will exclaim, 'Yahweh,
the commander of the heavenly armies, is the God who rules
Israel!' And you will make sure that a descendant of mine
will always rule the Israelites. 27 I am confident that you will
do this, because you, Yahweh, have chosen us Israelites to
be your people. You have revealed to me that you will make
some of my descendants kings. For that reason, I have been
bold enough to pray like this to you. 28 So now, Yahweh
my Lord, because you are God, we can trust that you will
do what you promise. You have promised to do these good
things to me. 29 So now I pray that it will please you to do
good things for my descendants. Please enable them to keep
ruling your Israelite people. Yahweh my Lord, you have
promised these things, and so I know that you will always
keep doing good things for my descendants."

8 Some time later, David and his army defeated the
Philistine army. They captured Metheg Ammah and
made the Philistines subject to the Israelites.

2 David and his army also defeated the Moabite army.
Afterwards, David forced their soldiers to lie down on the
ground *close to each other in a long line*. His soldiers went
down the line and measured two lengths of a rope. They
killed all of the Moabite soldiers in that part of the line. Then
they measured one length of that rope and let the Moabite
soldiers in that part of the line live. They continued to do
this all the way down the line. The rest of the Moabites had
to accept David as their ruler. Every year they had to give
him the payment that he demanded.

3 David's army also defeated the army of Hadadezer
son of Rehob, who ruled the region of Zobah in Aram.
That happened when Hadadezer led his army out to try to
get control over the territory that bordered the Euphrates
River. 4 David's army captured 1,700 of Hadadezer's soldiers
who were chariot drivers, and they also captured 20,000
footsoldiers. They crippled most of the horses that had pulled
chariots. But they spared 100 of the horses *for their own use*.

5 Then an army of Arameans from the kingdom whose
capital was the city of Damascus came to help King
Hadadezer's army. But David's soldiers killed 22,000 of those
Arameans. 6 Then David stationed groups of his soldiers in
that kingdom. Those Arameans had to accept David as their
ruler. Every year they had to give him the payment that
he demanded. Each time David led his soldiers into battle,
Yahweh enabled them to win victories over their enemies.

7 Some of Hadadezer's soldiers had carried shields that
had a plating of gold. King David's soldiers captured those
shields and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 They also brought
to Jerusalem large quantities of bronze from Betah and
Berothai, two cities in Hadadezer's kingdom.

9 When Toi, the king of the city of Hamath, heard that
David's army had defeated the entire army of King Hadadezer,
10 he sent his son Joram to make a peace treaty with King
David and to congratulate him for defeating Hadadezer's
army. Toi congratulated David because Hadadezer's army

had fought many times against his own army. Joram brought David many articles of gold, silver, and bronze as gifts.

11 King David dedicated all those items to Yahweh, just as he had dedicated the silver and gold that his army had captured from the nations they had conquered. 12 They had taken valuable items from the Arameans, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, and Amalekites. They had also captured many valuable items from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

13 David became even more famous after his army killed 18,000 Aramean soldiers in a battle in the Valley of Salt.

14 David stationed groups of his soldiers throughout the region of Edom. The Edomites had to accept him as their king. Each time David led his soldiers into battle, Yahweh enabled them to win victories over their enemies.

15 So David ruled over all the Israelite people. As king, he decided the people's cases, and he judged them fairly. 16 Joab son of Zeruiah was the army commander. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided that they should do. 17 Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the official secretary. 18 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's elite corps of bodyguards. David's sons were his advisors.

9 One day David asked some of his officials, "Are there any descendants of Saul still living? I promised Jonathan that I would act kindly toward his family, and I would like to do that if I can."

2 They told him that Saul's family had a household official whose name was Ziba. So David sent messengers to summon Ziba. When he arrived, King David asked him, "Are you Ziba?" He replied, "Yes, your Majesty, I am."

3 Then King David asked him, "Is there anyone still alive in Saul's family toward whom I can act kindly, as I promised God that I would do?" Ziba replied, "Yes, there is one son of Jonathan who is still alive. But he is not able to walk."

4 Then the king asked him, "Where is he?" Ziba replied, "I can tell you that he is living in the house of Machir son of Ammiel in the city of Lo Debar."

5 So King David sent messengers to Machir's house in Lo Debar, and they brought Mephibosheth to Jerusalem.

6 When Mephibosheth came to David, he knelt down with his face on the ground, to show respect. Then David said, "Mephibosheth." He replied, "What may I do for you, your Majesty?"

7 David said to him, "Do not be afraid. You can be sure that I am going to be kind to you because Jonathan your father was my friend. I will give back to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul. And I want you to always eat meals with my family in the royal palace."

8 Mephibosheth bowed in front of David again and said, "Sir, I am as worthless as a dead dog. I do not deserve for you to act kindly toward me!"

9 Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba. He told him, "I am now giving Mephibosheth everything that belonged to your master Saul and his family. 10 You and your sons and your servants must plow the land and plant crops and harvest them for Mephibosheth's family. That way they will have food to eat. Mephibosheth will eat meals regularly with me in my palace." (Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants.)

11 Ziba replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I will do everything that you command me to do about this." After that, Mephibosheth always ate with David's family as if he were one of his sons.

12 Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. All of Ziba's family and servants became servants of Mephibosheth. 13 So Mephibosheth came to live in Jerusalem, since he always ate meals with David's family in the royal palace. He was still not able to walk, because he had injured both of his legs.

10 Sometime later, Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, died. His son Hanun became the next Ammonite king. 2 David thought to himself, "Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to his son Hanun." So David sent some of his officials to tell Hanun that David was sorry that Hanun's father had died. When those messengers arrived in the land of Ammon,

3 the Ammonite military leaders said to King Hanun, "You should not think that when David sent these men to tell you he is sorry that your father died, he did that to honor your father. He sent them here to look around the city to determine how his army can conquer us!" 4 *Hanun believed what they said.* So he commanded some of his soldiers to seize David's officials and *insult them by* shaving off one side of their beards. He also had them cut off the lower part of their robes so that their buttocks would show. Then he made them leave Ammon and go back to Israel.

5 This made the men feel very ashamed. When David found out about what Hanun had done to his officials, he sent messengers to meet them on their way back to Jerusalem. *The messengers met them at the city of Jericho.* They told the men, "The king says you may stay here at Jericho until your beards have grown back and only return home after that."

6 Then the Ammonite leaders realized that they had greatly insulted David. So they sent some men to hire some soldiers from other nearby areas to help defend them. They hired 20,000 soldiers from the Aramean regions of Beth Rehob and Zobah. They also hired 1,000 soldiers from the army of the king of Maacah and 12,000 soldiers from the region of Tob.

7 When David heard about that, he sent Joab with all of the best Israelite soldiers to fight against them. 8 The Ammonite soldiers came from their city and formed a battle line in front of its wall. At the same time, the foreign soldiers whom their king had hired from Zobah, Rehob, Tob, and Maacah formed a separate battle line in the open fields nearby.

9 Joab saw that there were enemy armies in front of his troops and behind his troops. So he chose some of the best Israelite soldiers and put them in position to fight against the soldiers who were in the fields. 10 He told his brother Abishai to command the rest of the soldiers. They would oppose the Ammonite soldiers who had formed a battle line in front of their city wall. 11 Joab told Abishai, "If the soldiers from Aram are too strong for my men to defeat, then your men must come and help us. But if the Ammonite soldiers are too strong for your men, then my men will come and help them. 12 We must be strong and fight hard so that our enemies do not defeat us and then come and kill our people and destroy the cities in Israel, where we worship the true God. We will depend on Yahweh to make the right army win this battle."

13 Then Joab and the soldiers he commanded advanced to attack the army of Aram. *They defeated the Arameans so badly that* the Arameans ran away from them. 14 When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans were running away, they also ran away from Abishai and the soldiers he was commanding. They retreated back inside their city. So Joab

and his army stopped fighting against them and went back to Jerusalem.

15 The Arameans thought about how the Israelite army had defeated them. They decided to gather a much bigger army. 16 King Hadadezer summoned a great number of soldiers from the Aramean kingdoms that were on the other side of the Euphrates River. They gathered at the city of Helam. Hadadezer had his own army commander, Shobach, lead this army.

17 When David learned about this, he gathered all of the Israelite fighting men and led them across the Jordan River. They marched to Helam. The Aramean army formed a battle line there, and the two armies fought. 18 *The Israelites defeated the Arameans so badly that* the Aramean soldiers ran away from the Israelite soldiers. David and his army killed 700 of their chariot drivers and 40,000 other soldiers. They also wounded Shobach, Hadadezer's army commander, so badly that he died on the battlefield. 19 Then all the kings who has been Hadadezer's subjects thought about how the Israelites had defeated their combined armies. They decided to make a peace treaty with the Israelites. They agreed to accept David as their king. The Arameans would not help the Ammonites anymore after that, because they were afraid of Israel.

11 The following spring, at the time when kings usually led their armies to fight against their enemies, David sent out his commander Joab with his officers and the rest of the Israelite army. They fought the Ammonites and severely defeated them. Then they surrounded Rabbah*, their capital city,* and tried to capture it. But David himself stayed in Jerusalem.

2 Late one afternoon, after David had finished sleeping during the heat of the day, he got up and walked around on the flat roof of his palace. From there, he could look down and see a woman who was bathing in the enclosed courtyard of her house. The woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to find out who she was. He returned and told David, "That woman is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam. She is the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

4 But David sent messengers to get her anyway. They brought her to David, and he had sexual relations with her. (She had just finished performing the rituals to make herself pure after her menstrual period.) Then Bathsheba went back home. 5 Later, she realized that she was going to have a child. So she sent a messenger to tell David this news.

6 So David sent a message to Joab. He said, "Tell Uriah the Hittite to come back to Jerusalem so that I can speak with him." So Joab sent Uriah to go and speak with David. 7 When he arrived, David asked whether Joab was well, whether the other soldiers were well, and whether the Israelites were doing well fighting the war. 8 Then David told Uriah, "Now go home and relax for a while." So Uriah left, and David sent someone to bring some special food to Uriah for him to enjoy. 9 But Uriah did not go home. Instead, he slept at the palace entrance with the palace guards.

10 The next morning, someone told David that Uriah had not gone to his house that night. So David summoned him again. He asked him, "Why did you not go home and relax last night? You needed to rest after walking so far to get here."

11 Uriah replied, "The soldiers of Israel and Judah are camping in the open fields. Even our commander Joab and his officers are sleeping in tents like the rest of us. We brought the sacred chest with us, and it is also in a tent. *As a soldier who is part of this military campaign,* it would not be right for me to go to my home, enjoy food and drink, and have sexual relations with my wife. I swear by your life that I would never do such a thing!"

12 Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here another day, and I will let you return to the battle tomorrow." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and that night. 13 That evening, David invited Uriah to dine with him in the palace. David gave Uriah so much wine to drink that he got drunk. But after the meal, Uriah still did not go home. Instead, he slept that night on a cot in a room with the palace guard.

14 David *found out that Uriah had not gone home, so* the next morning he wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to bring to him. 15 In the letter, he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line at the place where he will be in the greatest danger. Then command the soldiers who are supporting him to retreat. That way our enemies will wound him so badly that he will die."

16 *When Joab got the letter,* he carefully observed the city's defenses. He found a place where the Ammonites had put many of their best soldiers. So he put Uriah in the front line there. 17 The Ammonite soldiers came out from that part of the city and fought with Joab's soldiers. They killed several of David's soldiers. Uriah was one of the soldiers they killed.

18 Then Joab sent a messenger to bring David news about what had happened in the battle. 19 He told the messenger, "Tell David the news about what happened in the battle. Once you finish telling him, 20 David may become angry *because we allowed the Ammonites to kill some of our soldiers*. He may tell you, 'Your soldiers should not have gone so close to the city to fight! You should have known that the Ammonite soldiers would shoot arrows at you from the top of the city wall! 21 You must remember how Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth died! A woman who lived in Thebez threw a heavy millstone onto him from the top of a tower, and that killed him. So our troops should not have gone near the city wall!' If the king says this, then tell him that his soldier Uriah the Hittite also died in the battle."

22 So the messenger went and told David everything that Joab had told him to say. 23 The messenger said to David, "The Ammonite soldiers organized an attack against us. They came out of the city to fight against us in the fields. We were able to force them to retreat right back to the city. 24 But then their archers shot arrows at us from the top of the city wall. They killed some of your soldiers, and Uriah the Hittite was one of the soldiers they killed."

25 David said to the messenger, "Go back to Joab and tell him, 'Do not feel badly about what happened, because no one ever knows who might die in a battle. Make an even stronger attack against the city and conquer it.' Encourage Joab by telling him those things."

26 When Uriah's wife Bathsheba heard that her husband had died, she mourned for him. 27 After her time of mourning ended, David sent messengers to bring her to the palace, and he married her. She later gave birth to a son whose father was David. But Yahweh was very displeased with what David had done.

12 Yahweh told the prophet Nathan what David had done, and he sent Nathan to correct David. Nathan came and told him a story *to help him recognize that he had done was very wrong*. He said, "Once there were two men in a certain city. One man was rich and the other was poor. 2 The rich man owned a lot of sheep and cattle. 3 But the

poor man had only one little female lamb, which he had bought. He raised the lamb, and it grew up with his own children. He would give the lamb some of his own food and let it drink from his cup. He let the lamb sleep as he held it next to him. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

4 One day a visitor came to see the rich man. The rich man did not want to take one of his own sheep or cattle and kill it to prepare a meal for his guest. Instead, he sent men to take the poor man's lamb. Then he had someone kill it and prepare it as a meal for his guest."

5 When David heard that, he became very angry with the rich man. He told Nathan, "I swear by Yahweh that I want to execute the man who did that! 6 *I cannot actually execute him, but at least* he must pay back four lambs to the poor man for so cruelly taking his one lamb."

7 Nathan said to David, "You have acted like the man I told you about. Now this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you: 'I was the one who chose you to be the king of Israel. When Saul was trying to kill you, I was the one who rescued you. 8 I gave you all of his property. I let you marry the women who had been his wives and concubines. I made you king over Israel and Judah. And if you had told me that you were not content with all that I had given you, I would have given you even more! 9 But you have not taken seriously what I commanded *when I said that my people must not commit adultery or murder*. You have done things that I consider to be very evil! You arranged for Uriah the Hittite to die in battle, and after the Ammonite soldiers killed him, then you took his wife as your own wife! 10 You did not respect me. Instead you took Uriah's wife to be your wife. As a result, people in your family will constantly be killing each other.' 11 This is what Yahweh says to you: 'I am going to make someone from your own family cause disaster for you. I will take your wives away from you and give them to that person instead. He will have sexual relations with them in public. And you will know about it. 12 While you tried to make sure that no one found out about what you did, I will make this happen in public. That way people throughout Israel will either see it or hear about it.'"

13 David replied, "I have sinned against Yahweh." Nathan said to David, "Yahweh has forgiven you for sinning. He is not going to punish you by killing you for committing this sin. 14 But you have shown great contempt for Yahweh by doing this. So the son you have just had is going to die."

15 Then Nathan went home. Uriah's wife had given birth to a baby boy who was David's son. Yahweh caused him to become very sick. 16 So David prayed to God that the child would not die. *To show how concerned he was,* he ate very little food. He also did not sleep in his bed at night. Instead, he slept on the floor of his room. 17 His most senior servants came and urged him to get up off the floor. But he refused to get up, and he refused to eat any meals with them.

18 After a week, the baby died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that. They said to each other, "Consider that while the baby was still alive, we encouraged him to take better care of himself, but he refused. Now if we tell him that the baby has died, he may do something to hurt himself!"

19 David saw that his servants were whispering something to each other. He recognized that the baby must have died. So he asked them, "Is the baby dead?" They replied, "Yes, he is dead."

20 Then David got up from the floor. He bathed himself, put olive oil on his hair and skin, and put on different clothes. Then he went to Yahweh's sacred tent and worshiped him there. After that, he came home. He asked his servants to bring him some food, and when they did, he ate it.

21 Then his servants said to him, "We do not understand why you have done this! While the baby was still alive, you cried for him and refused to eat. But now that the baby has died, you have gotten up and eaten some food!"

22 He replied, "While the baby was still alive, I ate little food and wept because I thought, 'Perhaps Yahweh will be merciful to me and allow the baby to live.' 23 But now that the baby is dead, there is no reason for me to go without food anymore. I cannot bring him back to me. Someday I will go to where he is, but he will not return to me."

24 Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba. He had sexual relations with her, and she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. David named this boy Solomon. Yahweh loved that little boy. 25 Yahweh told the prophet Nathan to tell David to name the baby boy Jedidiah, since he loved him.

26 Meanwhile, Joab's soldiers were still fighting to conquer Rabbah, the Ammonite capital city. They captured the part of the city where the king had his palace. 27 Then Joab sent messengers to David to tell him, "My troops have been attacking Rabbah, and we have captured the part of the city that is down by the river. 28 Now assemble all the rest of our soldiers. Come and attack the fortress that is on higher ground and capture it. If you do not do that, my soldiers will capture the fortress, and then people will give the whole city a new name, The City of Joab."

29 So David assembled the rest of the Israelite soldiers. They went to Rabbah and attacked it, and they captured it. 30 Then David took the golden crown off the head of their king and put it on his own head. It weighed 34 kilograms, and it had a very valuable stone in it. David's soldiers also took many other valuable things from the city. 31 Then the Israelite soldiers brought the Ammonite people out of the city and forced them to work for them using saws, iron picks, and iron axes. David's troops also forced them to make bricks. David's soldiers made the people who lived in the other Ammonite cities work for them in the same way. Then David and all of his army returned to Jerusalem.

13 After this, the trouble that Nathan had announced began in David's family. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar. Another of David's sons, Amnon, wanted to have sexual relations with her. 2 He wanted so badly to have sexual relations with his half-sister Tamar that he felt sick. But because she was an unmarried young woman*, she lived separately from the men in the palace, so* Amnon thought he would never have a relationship with her.

3 But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab. He was the son of David's brother Shimeah. Jonadab knew well how to deceive people in order to get what he wanted.

4 One day Jonadab said to Amnon, "Even though you are the king's son, every day *when I see you,* you seem depressed. Please tell me why." Amnon replied, "I feel sexual desire toward Tamar, the sister of my half-brother Absalom."

5 Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend that you are sick. Your father will come to visit you. *Tell him that you do not feel like eating anything, but you might eat* if someone prepared food while you were watching so you could see what the person was doing and if the person then

served you the food directly. Suggest that you half-sister Tamar could come and do this for you."

6 So Amnon lay down and pretended that he was sick. When King David came to visit him, Amnon told him, "*I might eat something if* someone made a couple of pancakes for me while I was watching and then served them to me directly. Please allow my half-sister Tamar to come and do that for me."

7 So David sent a message to Tamar in the palace. He told her, "Amnon your half-brother *is sick, so* please go to his house and prepare some food for him *so that he will eat*."
8 So Tamar went to Amnon's house. He was lying on a couch there. While he was watching her, she took some dough and kneaded it, then she formed it into some pancakes and baked them. 9 She brought the pan and served the pancakes from it onto a plate in front of Amnon. But he refused to eat them. He said to everyone else who was present, "All the rest of you, leave me!" So they all left.

10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, "*I need to lie in bed, so* bring the food into my bedroom and serve it to me there." So Tamar brought the pancakes that she had made into his bedroom. 11 But when she brought them close for him to eat them, he grabbed her and told her, "I want to have sex with you!"

12 She replied, "No, do not force me to have sex with you! Israelites should not do things like that. You are my half-brother! So do not commit this crime against me! 13 If you did, I would always have shame afterwards. And as for you, you would be acting like the Israelite men who do wrong things without regard for God. So I plead with you, ask the king *to allow you to marry me*. I am sure he would agree to let me become your wife." 14 But he refused to do what she said he should do. He was stronger than she was, so he forcibly had sexual relations with her.

15 Afterwards, Amnon felt great hatred toward her. He hated her much more than he had desired her. He told her, "Now I want you to leave!"

16 But she told him, "No! You should not send me away. That would be very wrong. It would be worse than what you just did to me!" But again he refused to do what she said he should do.

17 Instead, he summoned his personal servant and told him, "Take this woman outside, away from me, and lock the door so that she cannot come in again!" 18 So the servant put her outside and locked the door so that she could not come in again. Now Tamar was wearing a long robe. That was the clothing that the unmarried daughters of the king customarily wore at that time.

19 But *to show how distressed she was,* Tamar put ashes on her head. She tore the long robe that she was wearing. She also placed her hand on her head. As she went away, she kept screaming.

20 Her brother Absalom *saw her and* said to her, "Did your half-brother Amnon force you to have sex with him? Please, my sister, do not tell anyone. He is your half-brother. Do not let this bother you." Then Tamar went to live in Absalom's house, and she never got married.

21 When King David learned what had happened, it made him very angry *but he did not do anything about it*. 22 Absalom hated Amnon because he had forcibly had sexual relations with his sister Tamar. But he did not say anything to Amnon about this*, because he did not want Amnon to suspect that he wanted to kill him*.

23 However, two years later, Absalom hired men to cut the wool off his sheep at Baal Hazor, where he lived. That place is near the tribal land of Ephraim. He was going to host a celebration when they finished cutting the wool off the sheep, and Absalom invited all the king's sons to come to the celebration. 24 Absalom went to King David and said to him, "Sir, I have workers shearing my sheep *and we are going to celebrate when they finish*. Please come with your officials to celebrate with us!"

25 But the king replied, "No, my son, it would not be good for all of us to come. That would be too great an expense for you." Absalom kept inviting him, but King David finally refused. Instead, he said that he hoped that God would make them happy while they celebrated.

26 Then Absalom said, "If you will not come, please send my half-brother Amnon *the crown prince* with us *as your representative*." But the king replied, "You do not need to invite him to the celebration either."

27 But Absalom insisted, and finally King David agreed to let Amnon go with Absalom. He sent all of his other sons with him.

28 At the celebration, Absalom told his servants, "Pay attention to these instructions. Once Amnon has become a bit drunk from the wine, I will shout out, 'Kill Amnon!' When I say that, you must kill him. Do not be afraid. You will be doing this only because I told you to do it. So be very brave *and do it*!" 29 So Absalom's servants did what Absalom told them to do. They killed Amnon. When the rest of David's sons saw what had happened, they left the celebration. They got onto their mules and escaped by riding away fast.

30 While they were still on their way home, someone *who had fled when the servants first killed Amnon* rushed back and reported *incorrectly* to David, "Absalom has killed all of your other sons! None of them is still alive!" 31 When King David heard this, he got up from his throne, tore his clothes, and then lay down on the ground *to show how sad he was*. His officials also tore their clothes, and they stood around him *to show their sympathy*.

32 But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, said, "Your Majesty, please do not believe that Absalom has killed all your sons. I am sure that only Amnon is dead. I say this because Absalom has wanted to kill him ever since the day that Amnon raped his sister Tamar. 33 So, your Majesty, please do not let the thought that all your sons may be dead cause you great distress. I am sure that only Amnon is dead."

34 (Absalom had fled *from the celebration after his servants killed Amnon*.) One of the city guards looked out and saw a large crowd of people coming around from behind a hill on the road from the west *and reported this to King David*.

35 Jonadab said to the king, "You see, what I told you is true. Your other sons are alive, and they are coming here now."

36 And as soon as he said that, David's sons came in. They were all crying loudly, and David and all his officials also cried very much.

37 Absalom fled *for safety* to the kingdom of Geshur, where *his grandfather* Talmai son of Ammihud was the king. King David mourned continually for his son Amnon. 38 When Absalom fled to the kingdom of Geshur, he stayed there for three years. 39 King David had intended to attack Absalom *to capture him and punish him for killing Amnon*. But by the end of those three years, David was not grieving as severely that Amnon had died, so he no longer planned to attack Absalom.

14 But Joab recognized that the king was still angry
with Absalom. 2 So Joab sent someone to the city of
Tekoa to bring to him a woman who was very clever. When
she arrived, Joab said to her, “I want you to look very sad,
as if you are grieving because someone you love has died.
Put on the clothes that people wear who are mourning. Do
not put any olive oil on your hair or skin. Act as if you are a
woman who has been mourning for a long time for someone
who has died. 3 Then go to King David and tell him what I
tell you to say.” Then Joab told her what to say.

4 So the woman who was from Tekoa went to the king.
She got down and lay flat out in front of him to honor him,
and then she cried out, “Your Majesty, please help me!”

5 The king replied, “What is your problem?” She replied,
“Sadly I am a widow. My husband died some time ago. 6 I
had two sons. But one day they quarreled with each other
while they were working out in the field. There was no one
to separate them, and one of them hit the other one so hard
that he killed him. 7 Now, all of my extended family has
come to me and insisted that I surrender to them my son
who is still alive. They want to kill him to punish him for
killing his brother. But if they do that, I will not have any
son to inherit my late husband’s land *and the family will take
it*. My son is the only relative I have left. If they kill him,
my husband will have no living descendants to preserve our
family’s name.”

8 Then the king said to the woman, “I will forbid anyone
to punish your surviving son by killing him. So you may go
back home *without appealing any further*.”

9 The woman from Tekoa replied to the king, “Your
Majesty, *let me reassure you that* if my son actually is guilty of
murder and deserves to die, then I will accept the blame and
expect Yahweh to punish me and my family. May Yahweh
not punish you or the kingdom of Israel because you have
said that no one should kill my surviving son.”

10 The king said to her, “If anyone continues to demand
that you surrender your surviving son for execution, bring
that person to me. I will make sure that he never causes you
trouble again.”

11 Then the woman said, “Your Majesty, please swear by
Yahweh your God that you will do this. That way the relative
who would be responsible to kill my son if he had actually
murdered his brother will not kill him and cause someone
further to die in my family.” David replied, “I swear by
Yahweh that I will not allow anyone to hurt your son at all.”

12 Then the woman said, “Your Majesty, please allow me
to say one more thing to you.” He replied, “Speak!”

13 The woman said, “You have been acting badly toward
God’s people. Based on the judgment you have just given, you
have been doing the wrong thing. *Since you take circumstances
into account when judging cases of manslaughter,* you should
allow your son Absalom*, our crown prince,* to return home.
14 Consider that all of us are going to die. Like water that no
one can pick up from the ground once someone has spilled
it, death is permanent *so you should reconcile with Absalom
while you are both still alive*. And it is not God who makes
people die *even to punish them when they have done wrong
things*. Instead, God forgives people who have sinned against
him so that they can once more be in a good relationship
with him.

15 I came to appeal to you, Your Majesty, because I was
very afraid that the members of my extended family would
kill my son. I said to myself, ‘I will go and talk to the king,
and maybe he will do what I ask him to do. 16 Perhaps he
will listen to me and save my son from the man who is trying
to kill him. If that man kills my son, I might die too *without
his support*. Then we would both no longer be a part of the
Israelite community.’

17 And I decided, ‘What the king says will comfort me,
because he is like an angel of God. He knows how to determine
what is right and what is wrong.’ I pray that Yahweh your
God will help you.”

18 In response King David told the woman, “I am going
to ask you about something, and I want you to tell me the
whole truth about it.” The woman replied, “Go ahead and
ask, Your Majesty*, and I will answer truthfully*.”

19 The king said, “Did Joab arrange for you to do all this?”
She replied, “I swear by your life, Your Majesty, that it is
not possible to say otherwise than you have said! Yes, it was
in fact Joab who told me to come here, and he was the one
who told me what to say. 20 Joab did that to try to get you
to feel differently about this matter. But Your Majesty, you
seem to be as wise as one of God’s angels. You know what
is happening throughout your kingdom*, and that is how you
knew that Joab sent me here*.”

21 Then King David had his servants bring Joab to him.
David told Joab, “Listen! I have decided to do what you
want. So you may go and get that young man Absalom and
bring him back here to Jerusalem.”

22 Joab got down and lay flat out in front of David to
honor him. Then he asked God to do good things for him.
Then Joab said, “Your Majesty, now I know that you are
pleased with me, since you have agreed to do what I asked.”

23 Then Joab did what David had said he could do. He
went to Geshur and got Absalom and brought him back to
Jerusalem. 24 But King David had said that while Absalom
could live in his own house again, he could not come and
speak with him. So Absalom lived in his own house, but he
did not go and speak with the king.

25 Now people throughout Israel praised Absalom for
being a very handsome man. He did not seem to have any
flaws in any part of his body. 26 Absalom wore his hair long
and only cut it once a year when it became too heavy on his
head. When he cut his hair, he would weigh it, and *because it
was so thick* it always weighed nearly a kilogram. 27 Absalom
had three sons. He also had a daughter, whose name was
Tamar. She was a very beautiful woman.

28 Even though Absalom had lived in Jerusalem for two
entire years, David had still not allowed him to come and
speak with him. 29 So Absalom sent a messenger to ask Joab
to come and speak with him. Absalom wanted to ask Joab to
help him receive permission to speak with King David. But
Joab refused to come and speak with Absalom. So Absalom
sent another messenger to ask Joab to come and speak with
him. But Joab still would not come.

30 Then Absalom told his servants, “Here is what I want
you to do. Joab owns a piece of land next to my land, and
he has barley growing there. Go over and start a fire there
to burn up the barley.” So Absalom’s servants went over and
started a fire, and it burned up all the barley.

31 Joab *realized who must have started the fire, so he* went
to Absalom’s house and demanded to know, “Why did your
servants burn up the barley that was growing on my piece
of land?” 32 Absalom replied, “I had them do that because
when I sent messengers to ask you to come and speak with
me, you refused. I wanted you to go to the king and tell him
on my behalf that it seemed useless for me to have come here
from Geshur and that I thought it would have been better

for me to stay there. Now please get the king to allow me to come and speak with him. Tell him that if he is keeping me away to punish me for doing something wrong, he can go ahead and execute me!" 33 So Joab went to the king and told him what Absalom had said. Then the king sent messengers to bring Absalom to the royal court. Absalom came to the king and, to honor him, he knelt down in front of him with his face touching the ground. Then the king *indicated that Absalom could get up, and he* kissed Absalom on the cheek to show that he was no longer hostile to him.

15 Soon afterwards, Absalom got a chariot and horses to pull it. He hired 50 men to run in front of him while he was riding around Jerusalem in the chariot. 2 And Absalom would also go and stand by the city gate starting early each morning. When a person came toward the gate so they could go into the city and ask the king to decide a case for him, Absalom would call out to him. He would ask what city he was from. Then the person would tell him what *city and* tribe he was from. 3 Then Absalom would *ask the person about his case* and tell him, "It certainly seems to me that you deserve to win your case. But the king *is not able to decide everyone's case, and he* has not appointed anyone else to judge cases for people like you." 4 Absalom would then add, "I should really be a judge for all the Israelites. That way anyone who had a legal case could come to me, and I would decide it fairly."

5 And whenever anyone approached Absalom and started to bow respectfully in front of him, Absalom would reach out and hold him up and kiss him on the cheek. 6 Absalom acted this way toward every Israelite who came to King David to ask him to judge a case. As a result, the Israelites began to wish that Absalom were their king instead of David.

7 After four years, Absalom went to King David and said, "I made a promise to Yahweh. Please allow me to go to the city of Hebron so that I can do what I promised. 8 I ask this because when I was living in Geshur, in Aram, I promised Yahweh that if he made it possible for me to return to Jerusalem, then I would worship him in Hebron *and thank him publicly*."

9 The king replied, "You have my permission to go." So Absalom went to Hebron.

10 But while he was there, he secretly sent messengers throughout the territory of all the tribes of Israel. The messengers told people, "When you hear the sound of people blowing rams' horns, shout, 'Absalom has become the king at Hebron!'" 11 There were 200 men who came from Jerusalem to Hebron with Absalom. But they came because he had invited them to the feast he was going to host there. They were not part of his conspiracy. They knew nothing about what he was planning to do. 12 King David had an advisor whose name was Ahithophel the Gilonite. While Absalom was offering sacrifices at Hebron, he sent messengers to bring Ahithophel from his home in the city of Giloh. Many other people also came and joined Absalom *in his rebellion against David*.

13 Then someone came to David and warned him, "The Israelites now want Absalom to be their king!"

14 So David told all the officials in his royal court, "We must leave immediately if we want to escape from Absalom! We must go quickly, before he and his men arrive. If we do not do that, they will kill us and everyone else in the city!"

15 The king's officials replied, "Very well, your Majesty, we are ready to do whatever you wish."

16 So King David quickly left Jerusalem. His family and officials went with him. But David left ten of his secondary wives at the palace to take care of it. 17 Many of the people of Jerusalem also left the city with King David. They stopped at the edge of the city *to organize an orderly retreat*. 18 David stepped out of the roadway so that his officials could walk past him. He also let his elite corps of bodyguards go in front of him *to lead the way*. The 600 men who had been David's soldiers when he fled to the city of Gath also walked by in front of him.

19 Then David said to Ittai*, a military commander who had come* from Gath *to serve David*, "You do not need to come with us. You may safely return to Jerusalem and serve whoever is the king. After all, you are not an Israelite, and this is not your own country*, so people will consider you to be impartial*. 20 You have lived here in Israel for only a short time. And we do not even know where we will be going. So it is not right for me to make you come with us now and wander around with us. Please return to your country and take your troops with you. May people treat you kindly and be loyal to you."

21 But Ittai replied, "Your Majesty, I swear by Yahweh and I swear by your own life that I will go wherever you go. I will fight to defend you even if I have to die doing that."

22 David replied to Ittai, "Very well, please come with us!" So Ittai and all his troops and their families went with David.

23 All the people who lived along the road cried loudly when they saw King David and the people with him walking by. *Since Absalom would be coming from the southwest,* the king and the others crossed the Kidron Valley and then went up the hill on the road that goes through the desolate area *east of Jerusalem*.

24 Zadok the high priest had also left the city. He had brought the sacred chest of God. Some Levites were with him, and they were carrying it. But they *did not carry it across the Kidron Valley right away. Instead, they* set it on the ground. Abiathar, the other high priest, went up *the Mount of Olives on the other side of the valley and stood there*until all of the people fleeing from Jerusalem had gone by*, and then he came back down to where the sacred chest was*.

25 Then the king told Zadok, "I want you to take the sacred chest back into Jerusalem. If Yahweh chooses to be kind to me, someday he will allow me to return and see the sacred chest in the place where he is especially present. 26 But if he says that he is not pleased with me, then I am willing for him to do to me whatever he thinks is right."

27 He also told Zadok, "Now listen to what I want you to do. Go back to the city peacefully. Take your son Ahimaaz with you. Abiathar should also take his son Jonathan, and you should both go back. 28 This will be the plan. I will wait in the wilderness at the place where people can walk across the Jordan River until you send a message to me *telling me what I should do*." 29 So Zadok and Abiathar carried the sacred chest back to Jerusalem, and they remained in the city.

30 Then David walked up the Mount of Olives. He was crying as he walked. To show that he was very sad, he covered his head *with part of his cloak*. He also took off his sandals. All the people who were walking with him also covered their heads, and they too cried while they walked. 31 Then someone told David that Ahithophel had joined the Israelites who were rebelling against David and supporting Absalom as their king. So David prayed, "Yahweh, please make Ahithophel give Absalom bad advice!"

32 When they arrived at the top of the hill, where there was
a place where people worshiped God, David unexpectedly
met Hushai the Archite. To show that he was very sad, Hushai
had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head. 33 David said
to him, "If you come with me, you will make us travel more
slowly. 34 But if you return to the city, you can help me by
telling Absalom, 'Your Majesty, I will be your advisor. In
the past, I was your father's advisor. But just as I advised
him then, so I will advise you now.' If you do that, you
will be able to help me by countering any good advice that
Ahithophel gives to Absalom. 35 Zadok and Abiathar the
priests are already there. Whatever you hear people say in
the king's palace, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar. 36 Keep in
mind that Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan
are there. Whatever any of you find out, send them to report
it to me."
37 So David's friend Hushai returned to the city. He arrived
just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

16 When David and the others had gone a little way
past the top of the hill, he unexpectedly met
Mephibosheth's servant Ziba. He had two donkeys with
him that were carrying 200 loaves of bread, 100 bunches of
raisins, 100 bunches of fresh figs, and a leather bag full of
wine.
2 The king said to Ziba, "What is all this for?" Ziba replied,
"The donkeys are for your family to ride on. The bread and
the fruit are for your soldiers to eat. And the wine is for
anyone to drink who becomes tired in this desolate area."
3 The king said, "Where is Mephibosheth, the grandson
of your former master Saul?" Ziba answered, "You should
know that he has remained in Jerusalem, because he thinks
that now the Israelites will allow him to rule their kingdom
as his grandfather Saul did."
4 The king said to Ziba, "In that case, everything that
belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours." Ziba replied, "Your
Majesty, I will humbly serve you. I hope that you will always
be pleased with me."
5 When King David and those with him arrived at the city
of Bahurim, a man whose name was Shimei unexpectedly
came out of his house to meet him. Shimei's father was
Gera. They were members of the same clan that Saul's family
belonged to. Shimei kept cursing David as he approached.
6 Then he threw stones at David and his officials. David's
soldiers and bodyguards surrounded David *to try to protect him
from the stones*. 7 Shimei cursed David and said to him, "Go
away and never come back, you murderer, you scoundrel!
8 Yahweh is punishing you for killing so many people who
were Saul's relatives and supporters. You took Saul's place
as king, and now Yahweh is making your son Absalom take
your place as king. You are getting what you deserve for
killing so many people!"
9 Then Abishai said to the king, "Your Majesty, this man
is as worthless as a dead dog! You should not allow him to
curse you! Permit me to go over there and cut off his head!"
10 But the king replied, "I do not agree at all with what
you two sons of Zeruiah want to do. If he is cursing me
because Yahweh told him to curse me, then no one should
challenge him for doing that."
11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his officials, "You
know that my very own son is trying to kill me. So it is
not surprising that this man from the tribe of Benjamin also
wants me to die. Just ignore him and let him curse me if
Yahweh has told him to do that. 12 Perhaps Yahweh will see
how much trouble I am having and decide to make good
things happen to me instead of the curses that this man is
shouting at me today." 13 So David and those who were with
him continued walking along the road. Shimei walked along
the hillside next to the road, and as he walked along next to
them, he kept cursing David and throwing stones and dirt at
him. 14 King David and the people who were traveling with
him were very tired by the time they got to the place where
people can walk across the Jordan River. But they were able
to get a good rest there.
15 While that was happening, Absalom and all the
Israelites who were supporting him had arrived in Jerusalem.
Ahithophel had also arrived there. 16 Then David's friend
Hushai came to Absalom and said, "May you, the king, live
a long time!"
17 Absalom said to Hushai, "You have been a loyal friend
of my father David for a long time. So I do not understand
why you did not leave Jerusalem with him."
18 Hushai replied, "Yahweh has chosen you to be the
king. So have all these people here, and so have all the
other Israelites. So I will now be loyal to you and stay here
in Jerusalem with you. 19 Besides, it makes sense for me to
serve you. After all, you are his son. Just as I served in your
father's royal court, in the same way, I will serve in your
royal court."
20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "What would you
advise that we should do?"
21 Ahithophel replied, "Your father left some of his
secondary wives in the palace to take care of it. I advise you
to have sexual relations with them. When people throughout
Israel hear that you have done that, they will realize that you
will never be able to reconcile with your father. Then all of
the Israelites who are supporting you will fight hard to make
sure that you defeat him." 22 So they set up a tent for Absalom
on the roof of the palace. Then Absalom had sexual relations
in the tent with each of his father's secondary wives, one
at a time. The Israelites in Jerusalem could see Absalom's
officials bringing each secondary wife into the tent, and they
could see Absalom going into the tent afterwards to have
sexual relations with each one.
23 In those days, people did what Ahithophel recommended
just as if God himself had recommended it. That was how
David had regarded what Ahithophel recommended, and
Absalom regarded it in that same way.

17 Then Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Please allow me
to pick 12,000 of our best soldiers so that I can lead
them tonight to chase David. 2 When we catch up to him,
he will be tired from traveling and physically weak. When
our soldiers appear, this will terrify him. The other people
who are with him will run away *and not fight against us*. We
will only need to kill the king. 3 After that, the others who
left Jerusalem with him will return to the city and accept
you as their king. If we just kill the man you want to catch,
that will be enough to get all the others to come back. It will
not be necessary to hurt anyone else." 4 Absalom and all the
Israelite leaders who were with him thought that it would
be good to do what Ahithophel had recommended.
5 But then Absalom said, "Ask Hushai to come and speak
to us as well. We should find out whether he recommends
anything different that we should consider." 6 When Hushai
arrived, Absalom told him what Ahithophel had suggested.
Then he asked Hushai, "What do you think we should do? If

you do not think that we should do what Ahithophel advises,
then tell us what you think we should do instead."
7 Hushai replied, "This time, what Ahithophel has
suggested is not good advice." 8 He continued, "You know
that your father and the men who are with him are elite
soldiers. You know that they must be very angry, like a
wild mother bear whose cubs someone has stolen from her.
Furthermore, your father has fought in many battles, *so he
knows what he should do now*. He will not spend the night with
the crowd of people who left Jerusalem with him. 9 Right
now he is probably already hiding in a cave or in some other
safe place. If Ahithophel leads soldiers out to attack David's
soldiers, David's soldiers will certainly kill some of them at
the start of the battle. When people hear about that, they will
say, 'David's soldiers are slaughtering Absalom's soldiers!'
10 Then your other soldiers, even if they are as fierce as lions,
will become very afraid. After all, everyone in Israel knows
that your father is a great soldier and that the soldiers who
are with him are very brave.
11 So this is what I recommend. You should really summon
the entire Israelite army. Have the solders come here even if
they live as far away as Dan *in the far north* or Beersheba *in
the far south*. You will have too many soldiers to count, like
the grains of sand on the seashore. *Wait until they come, and
then* you yourself should lead the army into battle. 12 We will
find your father, wherever he is, and our great army will
overwhelm his smaller army, just as dew covers the entire
ground. Neither he nor any of the soldiers who are with him
will survive. 13 If he decides to retreat into some city, all our
soldiers will bring ropes to that city and pull it down into
the valley below. As a result, not one stone will remain on
top of the hill where that city was!"
14 Absalom and the other Israelite leaders who were with
him decided, "What Hushai suggests is better than what
Ahithophel suggested." Yahweh led them not to accept
Ahithophel's advice, which actually would have been better
for Absalom. As a result, Yahweh caused a great defeat for
Absalom.
15 Then Hushai *went secretly and* told the two priests,
Zadok and Abiathar, what both he and Ahithophel had
suggested to Absalom and the Israelite leaders. 16 Then he
said to them, "*There is still a risk that Absalom might decide
to do what Ahithophel suggested, so* send a message quickly
to David. Tell him not to stay overnight at the place where
people can walk across the Jordan River. Instead, he and his
soldiers must cross the Jordan River immediately. Otherwise,
Absalom and his army may come and kill them."
17 The priests' two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, were
staying near En Rogel, *outside Jerusalem*. They did not dare
to enter the city, *because if someone saw them, he would report
it to Absalom*. Instead, they had arranged for a woman who
served the two priests to come and report to them what was
happening. They would then go and report it to King David.
18 But a young man saw them at En Rogel, and he went
and reported this to Absalom. *They knew the young man had
recognized them,* so both of them left quickly and went to
the house of a man who lived in the city of Bahurim. That
man had a well in his courtyard, and he let Jonathan and
Ahimaaz go down into the well to hide. 19 The man's wife
took a cloth and covered the opening of the well. Then she
scattered grain on top of it *to make it look as if this was the
place where she dried the grain in the sun*. As a result, it was
not evident that there was a well beneath the cloth.
20 Some of Absalom's soldiers learned in what direction
the two men had gone. So they went *in that direction* and
came to the house *where they were hiding*. They asked the
wife, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" She replied, "They
went across that stream over there." So the soldiers went
in that direction and searched for them. But they could not
find them, so they went back to Jerusalem.
21 After the soldiers had gone, the two men came out of
the well and went and reported to King David. They told
him, "Ahithophel has encouraged Absalom to attack you
immediately. So you must get all these people across the
Jordan River quickly!" 22 So David and all his soldiers quickly
started to cross the Jordan River, and by the next morning
they had all crossed to the other side.
23 When Ahithophel realized that Absalom was not going
to do what he had recommended, *he knew that David would
defeat Absalom, so* he put a saddle on his donkey and returned
home to his own city. He gave to his family instructions
about what to do with his possessions, and then he hanged
himself *because he knew that otherwise David would kill him
as a traitor*. People buried his body in the same tomb where
people had buried his father.
24 David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim. At the
same time, Absalom and all his soldiers also crossed the
Jordan River. 25 Now Absalom had appointed Amasa to be
the commander of his army instead of Joab. Amasa was
the son of an Israelite man whose name was Ithra. Amasa's
mother was Abigail. She was the daughter of Nahash and the
sister of Joab's mother Zeruiah. 26 Absalom and his Israelite
soldiers set up their military camp in the region of Gilead.
27 When David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim,
Shobi son of Nahash from the Ammonite city of Rabbah,
Machir son of Ammiel from the city of Lo Debar, and Barzillai
from the city of Rogelim in Gilead came to them. 28 They
brought mats for them to sleep on and bowls and clay pots
that they could use to prepare and serve food. They also
brought wheat and barley, as raw grains, as flour, and as
roasted grains. They also brought beans and lentils, some raw
and some roasted. 29 They also brought honey, curds, sheep,
and cow's cheese. They knew that David and his soldiers
would need to have these things to eat because they would
be hungry and thirsty and tired from marching through a
desolate area.

18 David organized his soldiers for the battle. He counted
them and then appointed someone to lead each group
of a hundred soldiers. He then appointed someone to lead
each group of one thousand soldiers *that contained ten groups
of a hundred soldiers*. 2 David then sent the soldiers out in
three divisions. Joab commanded one division, Joab's brother
Abishai commanded a second division, and Ittai from Gath
commanded the third division. Before they left, David told
the soldiers, "I will go with you personally into the battle."
3 But his soldiers said, "No, we will not permit you to
come into the battle with us. Even if they defeat us so that
we all run away, they will not care about us. Or even if they
kill half of us, they will not care about that either. There
are ten thousand soldiers like us, *but only one king like you*.
So it would be better for you to stay here inside the city of
Mahanaim. You can receive reports of the battle and send
soldiers to where we need them, and you can keep the city
secure as a place to which we can retreat if we need to."
4 The king replied to them, "Very well, I will do whatever
seems best to you." So he stood beside the city gate and

observed while his soldiers marched out in their groups of hundreds and thousands.

5 As they were leaving, the king ordered Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, “For my sake, do not harm that young man Absalom!” All the soldiers heard David give this order about Absalom to his three main commanders.

6 So David’s soldiers went out to fight against the Israelite soldiers who were supporting Absalom. They fought a battle in the Forest of Ephraim. 7 David’s soldiers won the battle there against Absalom’s soldiers. They badly defeated them that day. They killed 20,000 of them. 8 The battle broke up into small skirmishes all over that area. The number of Absalom’s soldiers who died that day because of accidents in the forest was greater than the number of them whom David’s soldiers killed in the battle.

9 In the forest, Absalom suddenly noticed that some of David’s soldiers were near him. Absalom was riding on the mule *that the Israelite king rode*. *To get away from David’s soldiers, he made the mule run away, and* the mule ran under the thick branches of a large oak tree. Absalom’s head got caught in the branches. The mule he was riding kept going, and that left Absalom dangling in the air.

10 One of David’s soldiers saw what happened. He went and told Joab, “Listen, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree!”

11 Joab said to the man, “Listen, when you saw him hanging there, you should have killed him immediately! If you had killed him, I would have rewarded you with ten pieces of silver and a soldier’s belt!”

12 The man replied to Joab, “Even if you gave me a thousand pieces of silver, I would not do anything to harm the king’s son. I say this because we all heard the king command you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘For my sake, keep any soldier from hurting that young man Absalom!’ 13 If I had killed Absalom, I would have put my own life in danger. *The king would have heard about it, since* the king hears about everything. You would not have protected me by saying I was obeying your orders*, and the king would have executed me*.”

14 Joab said, “I am not going to stay here and speak with you any longer!” Then he got three spears and went to where Absalom was. Absalom was still alive, dangling from the branches of the oak tree. Joab thrust the spears into Absalom’s chest. 15 Then ten young men who carried Joab’s weapons gathered around Absalom, and they stabbed him repeatedly to finish killing him.

16 Then Joab blew on his ram’s horn to signal to his soldiers that they should stop fighting. So his soldiers stopped chasing Absalom’s soldiers and came back *to their camp*. 17 They took Absalom’s body and threw it into a huge pit in the forest. They covered it with a huge pile of stones. Meanwhile, all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been supporting Absalom ran away back to their own homes.

18 (Absalom had no sons to preserve his family name *because his sons had died while they were still young*. So while Absalom was alive, he had built a monument in the Valley of Kings *near Jerusalem*. He thought that if he did that, people would remember him. He named the monument after himself, and people still call it Absalom’s Monument.)

19 Ahimaaz son of Zadok said to Joab, “Allow me to run to King David and tell him the good news. I want to do this because Yahweh has shown that he wants David to remain as king, because he enabled his soldiers to defeat his enemies!”

20 But Joab said to him, “No, I will not allow you to run and tell this news to the king today. Some other day you may do that, but not today. I do not want you to bring to the king the news that his son is dead.”

21 Then Joab said to the man from Ethiopia who ran carrying messages for him, “You go and tell the king what you have seen.” So that man bowed respectfully to Joab *to show that he would obey* and started to run.

22 Then Ahimaaz said again to Joab, “However the king might respond to the news, even though your servant from Ethiopia has already left, please allow me to run too.” Joab replied, “My boy, you should not want to do that! You will not receive any reward for your news!”

23 But Ahimaaz replied, “However the king might respond to the news, I want to go.” So Joab said, “Very well, then, go.” Ahimaaz ran on the flat ground through which the Jordan River flows and arrived where David was before the man from Ethiopia did *because he had run through hills and forests*.

24 David was sitting in the area between the inner and outer gate in the city wall. A watchman went up on top of the city wall and stood on the roof over the gates. As he was looking around, he suddenly noticed a lone runner. 25 The watchman called down and reported this to King David. David said, “If he is alone, that indicates that he is coming to tell us news.” The man who was running continued to come closer.

26 Then the watchman saw another man running. So he called down to those below, “I see another man running alone!” And King David said, “He is also coming to tell us some news.”

27 The watchman said, “The first man seems to be Ahimaaz son of Zadok. He is running the way Ahimaaz runs.” The king said, “He must be coming to tell us good news, because Joab would not have sent someone like him to tell us bad news.”

28 When Ahimaaz got close enough, he called out to King David, “All is well!” When he arrived, he knelt down in front of him with his face on the ground to show respect. Then he said, “Your Majesty, praise Yahweh your God, who made your soldiers defeat the men who were rebelling against you!”

29 King David asked, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” Ahimaaz *did not want to answer that question, so he* replied, “When Joab sent the man from Ethiopia and me to bring news to you, I saw that there was a lot of confusion, but I do not know what it was about.”

30 So the king said, “Stand over there and wait.” So Ahimaaz stepped aside and stood nearby.

31 Then the man from Ethiopia arrived. He said, “Your Majesty, I have some good news to share with you. Here it is. Today Yahweh has shown that he wants you to remain as king, because he has enabled your soldiers to defeat the enemies who rebelled against you!”

32 The king said to him, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The man from Ethiopia replied, “Sir, I wish that what happened to him would happen to all of your enemies and to anyone who violently rebels against you!”

33 *Realizing that he meant that Absalom was dead,* David became extremely distressed. He went up to the room above the gateway and cried. As he was going up, he kept crying out, “O, my son Absalom! O, my dear son Absalom, I wish that I had died instead of you, Absalom, my dear son!”

19 Someone told Joab that the king was crying because
he was so sad that Absalom had died. 2 All of David's
soldiers heard that he was unhappy that their army had killed
Absalom. So even though they had won the battle against
Absalom's soldiers, they could not celebrate that day. 3 The
soldiers came back into the city quietly that day, the way
soldiers do so that no one will find out that they have run
away from a battle. 4 The king covered his face *with part of
his cloak*, and he kept crying loudly, "O, my son Absalom!
Absalom, my dear son!"

5 Joab went to the house where the king was and told
him, "Today your soldiers saved your life and the lives of
your sons and daughters and wives and secondary wives.
But you are making them feel shame for what they did!
6 You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who
love you! It is as if you have said that you do not care about
your own commanders and your soldiers. I can see that if
Absalom were still alive and all of us were dead today, you
would like that better. 7 So now you must go out and thank
your soldiers for what they did. I swear by Yahweh that if
you do not do that, they will all have abandoned you by
tomorrow morning. Then you will be in more trouble than
you have already had in your entire life!"

8 So the king went and sat at the city gate. People told
the soldiers, "Look, the king is sitting at the gate!" So the
soldiers came and gathered around him*, and he thanked them*.
Meanwhile, all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been
supporting Absalom had run away back to their own homes.

9 Then people throughout the territory of Israel began to
argue with each other about what they should do. Some of
them said, "King David led our armies to defeat the Philistines
and the other enemies who were oppressing us. But then he
left Israel in order to escape from Absalom! 10 We appointed
Absalom to be our king, but he died in the battle against
David's soldiers. So we should do something to bring King
David back!"

11 *King David learned what the people were saying,* so he sent
the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to say to the leaders
of Judah, "The king says that he has heard that the Israelite
people want him to be king again. He says that you should
not be the last ones to bring him back to his palace. 12 He
says that you are his relatives. You and he have the same
ancestor. So you should not be the last ones to bring him
back!" 13 He also told them to say to Amasa, "You are one
of my relatives. I swear that I am going to make you my
army commander from now on instead of Joab. If I do not
do that, then may God not make me the king again."

14 After David sent that message to them, the people of
Judah agreed that he should be their king again. So they sent
him a message that said, "We would like you and all your
officials to come back." 15 So King David and his officials
started back toward Jerusalem. When they arrived at *the
eastern shore of* Jordan River, the leaders of the tribe of Judah
met them. They had come to Gilgal *on the western shore* to
escort the king and his officials across the river.

16 Shimei son of Gera, that man from the tribe of Benjamin
who lived in Bahurim, hurried to the river with the leaders
of Judah to meet King David. 17 There were 1,000 men from
the tribe of Benjamin who came with him. Ziba, the servant
of Saul, also hurried to the Jordan River. He brought his
15 sons and 20 servants with him. Shimei and Ziba quickly
waded across the river to meet King David *on the eastern
shore*. 18 The elders of Judah then crossed the river at the
place where people could walk across it so that they could
escort King David and his officials back to the other side.
They wanted to do whatever the king wanted. Shimei came
and bowed down in front of David.

19 He said to the king, "Your Majesty, please forgive me
for the terrible thing that I did on the day that you left
Jerusalem. I hope that you will not punish me for it, and I
hope that you will not continue to feel hostile toward me.
20 I acknowledge that I have sinned against you. But please
consider that I have been first one from the northern tribes
to come here today to welcome you back, Your Majesty."

21 But Abishai son of Zeruiah, told David, "Shimei cursed
you, the man whom Yahweh appointed to be the king of
Israel! So you should not forgive him. You should execute
him for doing that!"

22 But David said, "I do not agree at all with what you two
sons of Zeruiah want me to do. You are encouraging me to
do something now that would not be good for me. I am not
going to execute anyone in Israel today. I know confidently
that the Israelites want me to be their king*, so I do not need
to execute this man to make my reign more secure*." 23 Then
King David told Shimei, "I promise that I will not execute
you," and he swore an oath that he would not execute him.

24 Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also came to the Jordan
River to welcome King David back. *To show his grief,*
Mephibosheth had not cut his toenails or trimmed his
mustache or washed his clothes from the time that the
king left Jerusalem up to the time when he returned safely.
25 When he arrived from Jerusalem to welcome King David,
he said to him, "Mephibosheth, why did you not go with
me?"

26 He replied, "Your Majesty, *when I heard that you were
leaving Jerusalem,* I told my servant Ziba, 'Saddle my donkey
so that I can ride on it and go with the king.' But he deceived
me *and left without me. I could not follow him,* because I am
crippled. 27 He lied to you about me. But your Majesty, you
are as wise as one of God's angels. So do whatever seems
right to you. 28 I consider that all of my grandfather's family
expected that you would execute us. But instead, you allowed
me to eat my meals with your household! So I certainly do
not have the right to ask you for anything further."

29 King David replied, "You do not need to say anything
more. I have decided that you and Ziba will equally divide
the land *that belonged to your grandfather Saul*."

30 Mephibosheth replied to the king, "Your Majesty, Ziba
may have all of the land. All that matters to me is that you
have returned safely."

31 Barzillai the Gileadite had come down to the Jordan
River from his home in Rogelim to escort the king across the
river. 32 By this time Barzillai was elderly. He was 80 years
old. But he was such a wealthy man that he had been able to
provide all of the food that the king and his soldiers needed
while they were at Mahanaim. 33 The king said to Barzillai,
"Come across the Jordan River with me to Jerusalem, and I
will take care of you there."

34 But Barzillai replied, "I do not have many more years
to live. So there is no reason for me to go with you to
Jerusalem. 35 I am now 80 years old. I do not know what is
enjoyable and what is not enjoyable. I cannot enjoy what
I eat and what I drink. I cannot hear anymore the voices
of men and women as they sing. You would have to make
difficult arrangements for me. I do not want you to have to
do that. 36 I will cross the Jordan River with you and walk a
short distance with you toward Jerusalem. But you do not
need to entertain me there in your royal court. 37 Instead,

please allow me to return to my home. That is where I want to die, near my parents' grave *so people can bury me there*. But here is my son Chimham. Your Majesty, please allow him to go with you and serve you, and do for him whatever seems right to you."

38 The king replied, "Very well, Chimham may cross the river with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you. And I will also do for you whatever you want me to do."

39 Then the leaders of Judah and the people who had been with David honored him by leading the way across the Jordan River. David followed them across. He kissed Barzillai *on the cheek to show his affection and gratitude* and asked God to do good things for him. Then Barzillai returned to his home.

40 But Chimham stayed with King David as he continued on to Gilgal. Now the leaders of the tribe of Judah had escorted David across the Jordan River. But only some of the leaders of the other tribes arrived in time to do that with them*, since the leaders of Judah did not wait for them*.

41 Then, when the rest of the Israelite leaders arrived, they complained to David, "It was not fair for our fellow Israelites, those leaders from the tribe of Judah, to take you away from us! We all wanted to escort you and your family and your soldiers across the Jordan River. But they did that without waiting for us!"

42 The leaders from Judah told the leaders of the other tribes, "We escorted the king because he is from our tribe of Judah. You should not be angry about this. The king never paid for our food, and he never gave us any gifts."

43 The men of the other Israelite tribes replied, "We represent ten of the tribes that the Israelite king rules, and you represent only one. So you should not have treated us with disrespect *by bringing the king back across the Jordan River without us*. We were the first ones to talk about bringing David back to Jerusalem to be our king again." But the leaders of Judah angrily disagreed with the leaders of the other tribes of Israel.

20 There was a man there at Gilgal whose name was Sheba. He was the son of Bichri. He was a man who often caused trouble. He came from the tribe of Benjamin. He blew a ram's horn and called out, "David, that son of Jesse, does not belong to us at all! So, my fellow Israelites, let us return to our homes!"

2 Then the leaders of the Israelite tribes decided not to escort David back to Jerusalem. Instead, they did what Sheba had said *and returned to their homes*. But the leaders of the tribe of Judah remained with David. They still wanted him to be their king. So they escorted him from near the Jordan River back to the city of Jerusalem.

3 When David arrived at the palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten secondary wives whom he had left there to take care of the palace and put them in another residence where someone guarded them. David provided what they needed, but he never had sexual relations with them again. It was as if they were widows, even though their husband was still alive. They had to stay in that residence until they died.

4 Then King David told Amasa, "Summon the soldiers of the tribe of Judah to come here by the day after tomorrow. You must be here also*, ready to lead them into battle*." 5 So Amasa went to summon the Judean soldiers. But he did not return within the time that David had specified.

6 Then David told Abishai, "*If we do not capture him quickly,* Sheba son of Bichri will hurt us even more than Absalom did. So I want you to take the soldiers who are already here with me and go to capture him. If you do not do that, we will no longer know where he is going. That would allow him and his soldiers to go into cities that have walls *and then it would be difficult to defeat them*." 7 So Abishai led those soldiers out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba. They included Joab's personal guard, the king's elite bodyguards, and the men who had been David's army when he was in Gath.

8 When they arrived at the large rock that is in the region of Gibeah, Amasa met them*, leading a large army of Judean soldiers*. Joab was wearing armor for battle, and he had fastened a *short* sword in its sheath to his belt. He approached Amasa, and as he did, he made the sword fall out of its sheath into his hand.

9 Joab said to Amasa, "Hello, cousin! Are you doing well?" Then Joab grabbed Amasa's beard with his right hand so that he could kiss him *on the cheek as a friendly greeting*. 10 Amasa did not think that Joab would hurt him with the sword he was holding in his hand. But Joab thrust it into Amasa's belly, and his insides spilled out onto the ground. Amasa eventually died from this wound. Joab did not stab him again. Then Joab and his brother Abishai *and the soldiers they were leading* left and continued to pursue Sheba.

11 One of the young men who carried Joab's weapons stayed next to Amasa's body. He called out *to the Judean soldiers*, "Everyone who wants Joab to be our commander and who wants David to be our king, go with Joab *to capture Sheba*!" 12 Amasa *had fallen onto the road, and* he was rocking back and forth and bleeding severely *as he lay slowly dying*. Joab's soldier saw that the Judean soldiers were all stopping when they came to where Amasa was. So he dragged him off the road into a field and threw a cloth over him. 13 After that soldier took Amasa's body off the road, the other soldiers continued on and went with Joab to pursue Sheba.

14 Sheba fled north through the whole length of the territory of Israel and finally came to the city of Abel Beth Maacah. The soldiers of the Berites had formed their army and had also come north with Sheba as their commander. 15 Joab and the soldiers he was commanding *found out that Sheba had gone there, so they* went there and surrounded the city. They built a dirt ramp up against the outer wall of the city. Then they started battering the wall to try to make it collapse. 16 But a wise woman who lived in that city *stood on the top of the wall and* shouted, "Listen to me! Please ask Joab to come here, because I want to talk to him!" 17 So *they told Joab and* he came there, and the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" He replied, "Yes, I am." She said to him, "Please listen to what I say." He replied, "I am listening."

18 She said, "For a long time people have said, 'When people have problems, they ought to ask the people who live in the city of Abel what they should do.' By getting good advice here, they have solved their problems. 19 We who live in this city are peaceful and loyal Israelites. But you are trying to destroy our city. Many towns and villages in this area depend on us. You should not be trying to destroy a community that belongs to Yahweh!"

20 Joab replied, "I certainly do not want to destroy your city at all! 21 That is not what we want to do. But Sheba son of Bichri, a man from the hilly area where the people of the tribe of Ephraim live, is rebelling against King David. If you surrender only him to us, then we will go away from this

city." The woman replied to Joab, "We agree. We will cut off his head and throw it over the wall to you."

22 Then this woman went to the leaders of the city and told them what she had said to Joab. *They agreed, and* they cut off Sheba's head and threw it over the wall to Joab. Then Joab blew his ram's horn *to signal that his soldiers should stop fighting*. They left that city and returned to their homes. Joab returned to Jerusalem and told King David what had happened.

23 *After David became king again,* Joab was the commander of the entire Israelite army. Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's elite corps of bodyguards. 24 Adoniram supervised the men whom the king forced to work for him. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided. 25 Sheva was the official secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests. 26 And Ira from the city of Jair was David's advisor.

21 During the time when David ruled, there was a famine in Israel continuously for three years. David asked Yahweh why this was happening. Yahweh told him, "*There is a famine to show that* you need to punish Saul's family because Saul killed so many people from the Gibeonite group."

2 So the king asked the leaders of Gibeon to come and speak with him. (The people of Gibeon were not Israelites. They were instead an Amorite people group that had survived *when the Israelites invaded the land of Canaan and killed the rest of the Amorites*. The Israelites had solemnly promised that they would not kill them. But Saul had tried to kill all of them because he eagerly wanted the people of Israel and Judah to be the only ones living in that land.) 3 David said to the Gibeonite leaders, "What can I do to make up for what Saul did to your people so that you would then ask Yahweh to do good things for us Israelites again?"

4 They replied, "You cannot make up for what Saul did to us by having his family pay us any amount of money. And we do not have the right to kill any Israelites." So David asked, "So what are you asking me to do for you?"

5 They replied, "That man Saul wanted to destroy us so that none of us would live anywhere in Israel. And he killed many of us. 6 Give us seven of Saul's descendants *and allow us to execute them*. We will *kill them and* hang up their bodies in public so that Yahweh can see that we have punished Saul's family for what he did. We will do this in the city of Gibeah where Saul lived. Yahweh chose him to be the king of Israel *and he should have protected us*." The king replied, "Very well, I will give them to you *so that you can execute them*."

7 The king did not give Saul's grandson Mephibosheth to them. He was Jonathan's son, and David and Jonathan had made a solemn promise that they would never harm each other's descendants. They had sworn by Yahweh that they would keep that promise. 8 Instead, he took two sons whom Rizpah daughter of Aiah, had borne to Saul *as his secondary wife*. Their names were Armoni and Mephibosheth. David also took five of the sons of Merab, Saul's daughter. Merab's husband was Adriel son of Barzillai. He was from the city of Meholah. 9 David gave these men to the people of Gibeon *to execute*. They took those seven men to Gibeon and killed them and hanged their bodies up on the hill in that city. That was where people worshiped Yahweh and considered him to be present. The Gibeonites killed those seven men at the same time. Those men died at the beginning of the time of year when people harvest their grain, beginning with barley.

10 Then Rizpah took some rough cloth and hung it from a rock *near the bodies* so she could sit under it and have shade from the sun. She stayed there from the time that people started to harvest barley until the autumn rains began. She did not allow any birds to come near the corpses during the day, and she did not allow any wild animals to come near them during the night. 11 Someone told David what Rizpah daughter of Aiah, Saul's secondary wife, had done. 12 So he went *with some of his servants* to Jabesh Gilead, where the leaders of that city allowed him to take the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. The soldiers from that city had gone stealthily at night and taken their bones from the plaza in the city of Beth Shan. That was where Philistine soldiers had hung them on the day when they had killed Saul *and Jonathan* on Mount Gilboa. 13 David *and his servants* took the bones of Saul and Jonathan. Some other servants also took the bones of the seven men whom the Gibeonites had hanged.

14 David's servants went to the tomb of Saul's father Kish, in the city of Zela in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. There they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan *and the bones of the men whom the Gibeonites had hanged*. In this way, they did all that the king had commanded them to do. After the Gibeonites punished Saul's family for what he had done, God answered the Israelites' prayers for their land *and caused the famine to end*.

15 Later the Philistine army began to fight again against the army of Israel. David went with his soldiers to fight them. During the battle, David became tired. 16 One of the Philistine soldiers in the battle was a man whose name was Ishbi Benob. He was a giant as his ancestors had been. He carried a bronze spear that weighed almost three and a half kilograms. He also had a dangerous weapon. It seemed to him that he was going to be able to kill David. 17 But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to help David. He attacked the giant and killed him. Then David's soldiers made David promise that he would not go with them into a battle again. They said that if enemy soldiers killed him in battle, Israel would no longer have him as king to guide them.

18 Later, the Israelite soldiers fought another battle with the Philistines. This happened near Gob. During the battle, Sibbecai, from the clan of Hushah, killed Saph, who was a giant as his ancestors had been.

19 Later, the Israelite soldiers fought another battle with the Philistines near Gob. During that battle, Elhanan son of Jaare Oregim from Bethlehem killed Goliath from Gath. Goliath had a great spear whose shaft was very thick, like the bar on a weaver's loom.

20 Later, there was another battle near Gath. One of the Philistine soldiers was very tall. He had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He was a giant as his ancestors had been. 21 He challenged any Israelite soldier to fight him in single combat. David's older brother Shimeah had a son whose name was Jonathan. Jonathan accepted the challenge, fought this Philistine soldier, and killed him.

22 Those four men lived in Gath and were giants as their ancestors had been. David and his soldiers fought them and killed them.

22 After Yahweh had rescued David from Saul and his other enemies, David sang a song to Yahweh. 2 This is what he sang: "Yahweh, you are like a huge rock or fortress

where I can go to be safe. I can be confident that you will rescue me when I am in trouble. 3 Yahweh, you protect me. I am as safe as I would be if I were hiding on top of a cliff. It is as if you are a shield that defends me. You are the powerful God who saves me. You are like a high place where I find refuge. You save me from those who act violently toward me. 4 You deserve for people to praise you, Yahweh. When I cry to you *for help*, you rescue me from my enemies. 5 *Someone was trying to kill me, and* I was in such danger of dying that it was as if a huge wave was crashing over me. His wicked plans against me were like floodwaters that were carrying me away, and this made me very afraid. 6 I did not think I could escape going to the place where dead people go. It was as if that place had wrapped ropes around me and was pulling me down into it. It was as if the only direction I could walk was right into a trap where I would surely die. 7 But when I was very distressed, I cried out to you, Yahweh my God. From your temple in heaven you could hear me calling, and you listened to my prayer. 8 It made you so angry *that someone was trying to kill me, and you responded so powerfully,* that it was as if there was a great earthquake. It seemed as if the sky itself was shaking. 9 *Your power was so great that* it was as if there was a volcano from which smoke was rising, a stream of fire was flowing out that burned up everything in its path, and hot coals were flying into the air that started fires where they landed. 10 *Your power was so great* when you came *to help me that* it was as if there was a great thunderstorm, with only a little sky visible below the low-hanging dark clouds. 11 *You came very fast to help me, as if* you were riding on a creature that had wings. It was as if the strong winds *of a thunderstorm* were a bird that you were riding. 12 It was as if you had made the darkness of the storm a safe place for you to stay. Yes, it was as if you had a temporary shelter within the clouds that were full of water. 13 It was as if it became bright where you were within the clouds, and then lightning bolts came from there. 14 It was as if there was a loud sound of thunder in the sky because you, Yahweh, the God who is greater than all other gods, had spoken *to announce that you were coming to rescue me*. 15 It was as if you sent flashes of lightning that made my enemies so afraid that they ran away in different directions, as if you had shot arrows at them. 16 Then it was as if you shouted at my enemies *to tell them to stop trying to kill me*. It was as if you blew away all the water that was covering the bottom of the ocean and all the ground that was over the deepest part of the earth. 17 It was as if you reached down from heaven and grabbed me so that you could pull me up out of the deep water of the ocean. 18 There was a powerful man who wanted to harm me, and there were people who hated me. They were too strong for me to defeat, but you rescued me from them. 19 They attacked me, and they would have destroyed me, but you, Yahweh, protected me. 20 You brought me to a place where I was safe. You love me, and so you rescued me. 21 Yahweh, you did good things for me because I did what was right. I did not harm my enemies, so you made sure that they did not harm me. 22 Yahweh, I have lived as you want people to live. I have not stopped obeying you, my God, and done wicked things instead. 23 I have remained aware of what you have said people should do, and I have continued to obey all your laws. 24 I have not done anything for which you would blame me. I have been careful not to do anything for which you would punish me. 25 You have done good things for me because I did what is right. You recognize that I am innocent. 26 When people are loyal to you, you act loyally toward them. When people are careful to do good things for others, you do good things for them. 27 You allow sincere people to recognize how sincere you are. But when people try to trick others, you show that you are much more clever than they are. 28 You rescue people whom others are afflicting. You are aware of people who are arrogant, and you humiliate them. 29 Yahweh, you are like a lamp that shines light so that I can see even when it is dark. 30 With your help I have caught and defeated a band of raiders. With your help I have captured a city that had walls around it, as if I had leaped over those walls. 31 My God, everything that you do is perfect. Everything that you say is right. You protect everyone who depends on you, as if you are a shield that defends them. 32 Yahweh, you are the only real God. Only you are like a huge rock *where I can go to be safe*. 33 My God, you are like a very secure place where I can go to hide from danger. You make sure that nothing prevents me from doing what you want me to do. 34 You enable me to walk about safely in the mountains, as a deer does, without falling. 35 You teach me how to fight in a battle. You give me the strength to bend *and string* a bronze bow. 36 You have saved me by protecting me like a shield, and by answering my prayers, you have enabled me to defeat my enemies. 37 You have given me many ways to respond to each situation. As a result, I have been able to carry out my plans successfully. 38 I chased my enemies and defeated them. I did not stop fighting them until I had killed them all. 39 I defeated them so completely that they had no army left. The ones who fell to the ground never got up, because they died of their wounds. 40 You have given me the strength and courage to fight battles. When people revolted against me, you enabled me to subdue them. 41 You enabled me to defeat my enemies and step in triumph on their necks. You gave me power over those who hated me so that I was able to destroy them. 42 They looked for someone to rescue them, but no one did. They cried out *for help* to you, Yahweh, but you did not help them. 43 I defeated them so completely that they were no longer any threat to me, no more than tiny particles of dust would be. It was as if I had flattened them smoothly on the ground like the mud on the streets. 44 You rescued me from the Israelites who tried to rebel against me. You preserved me as the ruler of many nations. Foreign people are now my subjects. 45 Foreign rulers fearfully bow down in front of me *to show their submission*. When they heard about what Yahweh enabled me to do, they obeyed me. 46 I defeat foreign armies that resist me so that they become weak, like a plant that dries up in the sun. They surrender and come out of their cities with walls shaking with weakness and fear. 47 Yahweh, you are the only real God! I praise you! You are like a huge rock *where I can go to be safe*! You are the powerful God who rescues me. Everyone should exalt you. 48 You are the God who enables me to conquer enemies who have attacked me. You cause the people of other nations to be subject to my rule. 49 You kept my enemies from capturing me. People rebelled against me, but it as if their armies had been floodwaters and you lifted me out of them to safety. You rescued me from men who tried to harm me. 50 Because of all this, I thank you, Yahweh, so that all people groups will know that you are the one who has helped me. I sing to praise you for what you have done that has made you famous. 51 You chose me to be king, and you have done great things to save me from my enemies. You faithfully show kindness to me, David, whom

you anointed as king, and you will always show kindness faithfully to my descendants."

23 David son of Jesse was a man whom God caused to become great. The God whom the descendants of Jacob worship chose him to be the king of Israel. David wrote beautiful songs for the people of Israel. This is the last song that he wrote. 2 "The Spirit of Yahweh used me to say what he wanted to say. The message that I spoke came from him. 3 The God whom we Israelite people worship has spoken. The one who protects us Israelites said to me, 'Kings who rule fairly over people have great respect for me. 4 They are like the light that appears at dawn when the sun rises on a cloudless morning. The sunshine causes grass to sprout after the rain ends.' 5 And that is how God will surely bless my family, since he made a covenant with me that will last forever. He prepared that covenant carefully and guaranteed it. He will certainly act to help me and make the things happen that I truly want. 6 But God will remove all the people who disrespect him, just as people throw away thorns that hurt their hands when they try to pick them up. 7 Someone who wants to get rid of thornbushes does not grab them. Instead, he uses an iron shovel or a wooden stick to dig them out. Then he burns them right there."

8 Here is a description of David's greatest warriors. Three of them were the very greatest. Their leader was Josheb Basshebeth the Tahchemonite. HeonceHe fought and killed 800 enemy soldiers in a single battle.

9 The next of David's very greatest warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. The Philistine army invaded Israel, and the Israelite army came to fight them. The *Philistines were winning the battle, so the* other Israelite soldiers retreated. 10 But Eleazar fought even harder against the Philistine soldiers until he had almost no strength left. He had held his sword so hard for so long that his hand cramped and he could not let go of his sword. Yahweh won a great victory for the Israelites on that day. The other Israelite soldiers only came back to the battlefield to take the armor from the Philistines whom Eleazar had killed.

11 The next of David's very greatest warriors was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. Once the Philistine army invaded Israel and came to the city of Lehi, where there was a field of ripe lentils *that they wanted to steal*. The other Israelite soldiers ran away from the Philistine troops. 12 But Shammah stood in the middle of the field. He fought and killed Philistine soldiers *so that they could not steal the lentils*. And so Yahweh won a great victory for the Israelites.

13 At the time when David was staying in the cave of Adullam, three other men who were among his 30 greatest warriors came to help him. It was summer. A group of Philistine soldiers had set up their tents in the Valley of the Raphaites. 14 David was staying in the cave *because it was safe there*, and another group of Philistine soldiers was occupying *his home town of* Bethlehem. 15 One day David felt very thirsty. He said, "If only someone would bring me some water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" 16 So these three of his greatest warriors fought their way through the camp of Philistine soldiers at Bethlehem. They drew some water from the well there and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground *as an offering* to Yahweh. 17 He said, "Yahweh, it would certainly not be right for me to drink this water! That would be like drinking the blood of these men who were willing to die to get it for me!" So he refused to drink it. That was one of the things that those three of his greatest warriors did.

18 Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's younger brother, was the leader of those three of David's greatest soldiers. He once fought against 300 enemy soldiers and killed them all. As a result, he became famous like the three very greatest soldiers. 19 He was the most famous of those three of David's greatest soldiers, and he became their leader, although the three very greatest warriors were even more famous.

20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada from the city of Kabzeel was another of David's greatest soldiers. He won many great victories. He killed two of the best warriors in the Moabite army in single combat. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion there. 21 He also killed a huge Egyptian soldier. That soldier had a spear as a weapon. Benaiah had only a thick wooden rod. But he attacked the soldier and pulled the spear out of his hand. Then he killed him with his own spear. 22 Those are some of the things that Benaiah son of Jehoiada did. As a result, he became famous as one of those three of David's greatest warriors. 23 He was more famous than David's other thirty greatest warriors, although the three very greatest warriors were even more famous. David appointed him to be the commander of his bodyguards. 24 These are the names of David's greatest warriors: Asahel the brother of Joab; Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem; 25 Shammah the Harodite; Elika the Harodite; 26 Helez the Paltite; Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; 27 Abiezer the Anathothite; Mebunnai the Hushathite; 28 Zalmon the Ahohite; Maharai the Netophathite; 29 Heleb son of Baanah the Netophathite; Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin; 30 Benaiah the Pirathonite; Hiddai from the place where streams flow through Gaash; 31 Abi Albon the Arbathite; Azmaveth the Barhumite; 32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite; Jonathan son of Jashen; 33 Shammah the Hararite; Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite; 34 Eliphelet son of Ahasbai son of the Maacathite; Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite; 35 Hezro the Carmelite; Paarai the Arbite; 36 Igal son of Nathan from Zobah; Bani the Gadite; 37 Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai the Beerothite, who carried the weapons of Joab son of Zeruiah; 38 Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the Ithrite; 39 and Uriah the Hittite. Altogether, these were 37 of David's greatest warriors.

24 Yahweh was angry with the Israelite people again, and he led David to do something that caused trouble for them. David caused that trouble by saying, "Find out how many soldiers Israel and Judah have."

2 King David said to Joab, the commander of his regular army, "I want you to go with your officers through the territories of all the tribes of Israel, from Dan *in the far north* to Beersheba *in the far south*, and count the men who can fight as soldiers. That way I will know how many Israelite men we have who can fight as soldiers in the army."

3 But Joab replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I hope that Yahweh our God will give us Israelites a hundred times more soldiers than we have now. I hope that you will see this happen *in your own lifetime*. But I do not think it is a good idea to count how many soldiers we have."

4 But King David insisted that Joab do as he had said, and he ordered the commanders of the army to do it. So they left his court and went out to count the Israelite men who could fight in war.

5 They crossed the Jordan River and set up their tents south of Aroer, in the middle of the valley. From there they

went through the territory of the tribe of Gad, and from there they went *north* to Jazer. 6 Then they went *north* to Gilead and to the area of Tahtim Hodshi. Then they went to Dan Jaan *in the far north of Israel*, and then they went *farther west* to Sidon. 7 Then they went south to Tyre, a city that had high walls around it, and also to all the cities where some Hivites and Canaanites still lived. Then they went to Beersheba, in the desolate area in the southern part of the territory of Judah.

8 It took them nine months and 20 days to finish going throughout the land *and counting the people*. After that, they returned to Jerusalem.

9 They reported to King David the number of men that they had counted. There were 800,000 men in Israel and 500,000 men in Judah who were fit to serve as soldiers in the army.

10 But after David's officers had counted the fighting men of Israel, David felt very badly that he had told them to do that. He confessed to Yahweh, "When I ordered them to do that, I committed a very serious sin. Please forgive me. But now, Yahweh, I admit that what I did was very foolish."

11 When David got up the next morning, Yahweh gave a message to the prophet Gad. He was a man who helped David know what God wanted him to do. Gad said to David, 12 "Go and tell David that I say he must choose one of three punishments that I will describe. I will punish him with the one that he chooses."

13 So Gad went to David and told him that Yahweh had said he would need to choose one of three punishments. He then told David, "You can choose for there to be seven years of famine in Israel. You can choose for your enemies to keep defeating you so badly over the course of three months that your army keeps running away from them. Or you can choose for there to be a plague here in Israel for three days. I will go back and tell Yahweh your answer. So think carefully about what you will choose."

14 David said to Gad, "All those are very terrible things for me to choose between! But let Yahweh be the one to punish me *with a plague*, since he is very merciful. Do not let humans be the ones to punish me."

15 So Yahweh sent a plague on the Israelite people. It started that morning and continued for three days. Throughout the territory of Israel there were 70,000 Israelites who died because of the plague. 16 Then the angel who had killed all those people lifted his hand toward the city of Jerusalem in order to cause a plague that would kill many of the people who lived there. But Yahweh grieved about punishing any more people, and said to the angel "Put your hand back down *and do not cause a plague in Jerusalem*!" When Yahweh said that, his angel was standing near the place where Araunah the Jebusite threshed grain.

17 When David saw the angel who was causing the people to become sick and die, he spoke to Yahweh. He said, "Truly, I am the one who has committed the sin. I have done a very wicked thing, but these people are as innocent as sheep. They have certainly not done anything that is wrong. So you should punish me and my family, not these people!"

18 That day Gad came to David and told him, "Go to the place where Araunah the Jebusite threshes grain and build an altar to worship Yahweh there." 19 So David did what Gad told him to do, which was what Yahweh had commanded, and he went there. 20 When Araunah looked down and saw the king and his officials coming toward him, he came out of his house and lay down on the ground in front of the king *to honor him*, with his face touching the ground.

21 Araunah said, "Your Majesty, may I ask why you have come to me?" David replied, "I have come to buy this ground where you thresh grain. That way I can build an altar here to Yahweh *and offer sacrifices on it* so that he will stop the plague that has been killing so many Israelites."

22 Araunah replied to David, "Your Majesty, please offer to Yahweh whatever you wish. You may take the oxen that you see here and use them for an offering that you burn completely on the altar. And you may take their yokes and the boards that I use for the threshing, which you also see here, and you may use them for the wood that you will burn. 23 Your Majesty, I, Araunah, hereby give all these things to you." Then he said, "I hope that Yahweh your God will accept your offering and grant your request."

24 But the king said to Araunah, "No, I will not accept these things as a gift. I will pay you for them. I will not take things that have cost me nothing and burn them completely on an altar as offerings to Yahweh." So David paid 50 shekels of silver to Araunah for the oxen and the ground.

25 Then David built an altar there to Yahweh. He burned the oxen completely on the altar as an offering. He also offered fellowship sacrifices. Then Yahweh answered David's prayers for the people of his land, and he ended the plague that had been killing so many Israelites.