

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

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Second Kings

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Second Kings

1 After King Ahab died, the Moabites rebelled against
Israel. 2 One day, Ahaziah, the new king of Israel, was
in his room on an upper floor of his palace in Samaria. The
window of that room had wooden slats, and he fell through
them *down to the floor below* and hurt himself badly. So
he sent for some messengers and commanded them, "Go
and ask Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether or not I
will recover from this injury." 3 But an angel representing
Yahweh told Elijah the Tishbite, "King Ahaziah has sent some
messengers to Ekron to ask Baal Zebub whether he is going
to recover. Go and meet those messengers and tell them to
tell Ahaziah that he should have consulted God right here
in Israel. 4 Yahweh says that you should tell King Ahaziah
that because he consulted Baal Zebub instead, he will never
recover from this injury. He will never get out of bed again.
Instead, he is certainly going to die." So Elijah went to meet
the messengers.

5 *After Elijah told them that,* the messengers returned to the
king *instead of going to Ekron*. The king asked them, "Why
have you come back so quickly?" 6 They replied, "A man
came to meet us and told us to go back to the king who sent
us and tell him that Yahweh says he should have consulted
God right here in Israel. He should not have sent messengers
to ask Baal Zebub whether he was going to recover! The man
told us to tell you that because you did that, you will never
recover from this injury and get out of bed again. Instead, you
are certainly going to die." 7 The king asked them, "What did
the man look like who met you and told you that?" 8 They
replied, "He was wearing a hairy cloak, and he had a wide
leather belt around his waist." The king said, "Then that was
Elijah the Tishbite!"

9 Then the king sent an officer with his fifty soldiers to
seize Elijah. They *went to look for him and* found him sitting
on the top of a hill. The officer shouted up to him, "You
prophet, the king commands you to come down here *so that
we can bring you to him*!" 10 Elijah replied to the officer, "I
am a prophet, as you say. So I command fire to come down
from the sky and burn you up along with your fifty soldiers!"
Immediately fire came down from the sky and burned up
the officer and his fifty soldiers. 11 *When the king found out
about that,* he sent another officer with fifty more soldiers
to seize Elijah. *They went to where Elijah was, and* the officer
called out to him, "You prophet, the king commands you to
come down immediately!" 12 Elijah replied to the officer, "I
am a prophet, as you say. So I command fire to come down
from the sky and burn you up along with your fifty soldiers!"
Then God sent fire down from the sky, and it burned up that
officer and his fifty soldiers. 13 *When the king found out about
that,* he sent yet another officer with fifty more soldiers. *They
went to where Elijah was, and* the officer went up to the top of
the hill *alone*. He bowed down *respectfully* in front of Elijah.
Then he begged him to be merciful. He said, "You prophet,
please do not kill me and my fifty soldiers! 14 We know that
fire came down from the sky and killed the first two officers
and their soldiers. But please do not kill me *and my soldiers*!"
15 Then the angel representing Yahweh told Elijah, "Go with
this man. Do not be afraid of the king." So Elijah got up and
went with the captain *and his soldiers* to the king. 16 *When*
Elijah *arrived, he* told the king, "Yahweh says that you should
not have sent messengers to go to Ekron to ask Baal Zebub,
their god, whether you would recover. You acted as though
there was no God in Israel to consult. So you will not recover
from this injury. Instead, you will certainly die!"

17 So Ahaziah died, just as Yahweh told Elijah to say
would happen. Ahaziah had no son to succeed him as king.
So Jehoram*, another son of Ahab,* became the next king.
This happened when Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat had been
ruling Judah for almost two years. 18 The book in which the
kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns
describes further things that Ahaziah did.

2 When Yahweh was about to take the prophet Elijah up
to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and his fellow prophet
Elisha left the city of Gilgal *in the territory of Ephraim, where
Elijah had been staying with a community of prophets*. 2 Elijah
told Elisha, "Yahweh has told me to go to the city of Bethel,
but I would like you to stay here." But Elisha replied, "I am
not going to separate from you. I swear by Yahweh and by
your own life that I will not do that!" So they went to Bethel
together. 3 A group of prophets lived in the city of Bethel.
Some of them came out and asked Elisha, "Do you know
that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away from
you today?" Elisha told them, "Yes, I know that. Please do
not say anything further about it." 4 Then Elijah told Elisha,
"Yahweh has told me to go to the city of Jericho, but I would
like you to stay here." But Elisha replied again, "I am not
going to separate from you. I swear by Yahweh and by your
own life that I will not do that!" So they went to Jericho
together. 5 A group of prophets lived in the city of Jericho.
Some of them came up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you
know that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away
from you today?" Elisha told them, "Yes, I know that. Please
do not say anything further about it." 6 Then Elijah told
Elisha, "Yahweh has told me to go to the Jordan River, but
I would like you to stay here." But again Elisha replied, "I
am not going to separate from you. I swear by Yahweh and
by your own life that I will not do that!" So they continued
walking together. 7 Fifty men from the group of prophets
who lived in Jericho followed them. They stood where they
could watch Elijah and Elisha from a distance as the two of
them stopped at the bank of the Jordan River. 8 Then Elijah
took off his cloak and rolled it up. He hit the water with it,
and path opened up for them through the Jordan River. The
ground on this pathway became dry, and that allowed them
to walk across to the other side. 9 When they got to the other
side, Elijah told Elisha, "Tell me what you would like me to
do for you before Yahweh takes me away." Elisha replied,
"*Since I am going to be your successor,* I want you to leave
me twice as much of your spirit as you leave to any other
prophet*, as if I were your firstborn son*." 10 Elijah replied, "You
have asked for something that would be difficult for me to
make happen. But if you see me when Yahweh takes me
from you, then you will get what you have requested. If you
do not see me, then you will not get it." 11 They continued to
walk *away from the Jordan River*. They were talking together
as they walked. Suddenly a fiery chariot that fiery horses
were pulling appeared. Its driver drove the chariot between
Elijah and Elisha to separate them. Then a whirlwind came
and lifted Elijah up into the sky. 12 When Elisha saw this,
he cried out, "Oh, my master! You protected Israel so well*,*

but now you are gone!" Elijah disappeared into the sky, and Elisha never saw him again. Then Elisha tore his robe into two pieces *to show that he was very sad*. 13 Elijah's cloak had fallen off when the whirlwind lifted him up. Elisha picked up the cloak and walked back to the Jordan River and stood at the water's edge. 14 He rolled up the cloak and struck the water with it. As he did that, he cried out, "If Yahweh, the God of Elijah, is present, may he do for me what he did for Elijah!" A path opened up for him through the water, and Elisha went across.

15 The group of prophets who had come from Jericho saw from a distance what had happened. They exclaimed, "Elisha now has the power that Elijah had!" They walked over to Elisha and bowed down very low in front of him *to show their respect*. 16 Then one of them told him, "Sir, we are concerned that after the Spirit of Yahweh picked up Elijah, he may have dropped him onto some mountain or into some valley. We would like to send fifty of our strongest men to look for him *on the other side of the river*." Elisha replied, "No, do not send them." 17 But they kept asking, and finally he felt embarrassed *because it appeared that he did not care about Elijah*. So he said, "Very well, send them." So they had fifty men search for three days, but they did not find Elijah. 18 Elisha went back to Jericho to wait for them. When they returned and told him they had not found Elijah, he told them, "I told you that you should not go*, because he was actually in heaven and you would not find him*!"

19 Then the leaders of Jericho came to talk with Elisha. One of them told him, "Sir, you can see that this is a very nice place to live in. But the water is harmful to drink. It is causing the women and female animals that live here to have miscarriages." 20 Elisha told them, "Put some salt in a new bowl and bring it to me." So they did that. 21 Then Elisha went out to the spring from which the people in the town got water. He threw the salt into the spring. Then he said, "Yahweh declares that he has made this water safe. Drinking it will no longer cause the women and female animals here to have miscarriages." 22 And the water became safe, just as Elisha declared it would. Since that time, it has remained pure.

23 Elisha left Jericho and went to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of boys came out from Bethel and started to make fun of him. They kept shouting at him, "Go away, you bald-headed man!" 24 Elisha turned around to look at them. He declared that Yahweh had cursed them. Immediately two female bears came out of the woods and mauled *and killed* 42 of them. 25 Elisha continued past Bethel and went to Mount Carmel. After that, he returned to the city of Samaria.

3 After Jehoshaphat had been ruling Judah for almost 18 years, Jehoram son of Ahab became the king of Israel. He ruled that kingdom from the city of Samaria for 12 years. 2 He did things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. But he did not do as many evil things as his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel had done. He destroyed the stone pillar for worshiping Baal that his father had set up. 3 However, he did not destroy the golden calves that Jeroboam son of Nebat had made. When Jeroboam made those calves, he led the Israelites to sin *by worshiping idols*. Jehoram did not lead the people to stop doing that.

4 Mesha, the king of Moab, raised sheep. Because the king of Israel controlled Moab, *every year* Mesha had to give him 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams that had full coats of wool. 5 But after King Ahab died, Mesha rebelled *and refused to pay this tribute to* the king of Israel. 6 When Mesha rebelled, King Jehoram left the city of Samaria and gathered soldiers from throughout Israel *to reconquer the Moabites*. 7 Then he sent messengers to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. They told him on behalf of Jehoram, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you lead your army and join me as I lead my army to fight to reconquer Moab?" Jehoshaphat told them to tell Jehoram, "Yes, I will help you. I will lead my army and join you as you lead your army. My soldiers and their horses will fight alongside your soldiers and their horses." 8 Jehoram then sent the messengers back to ask Jehoram, "What route should we take to attack Moab?" Jehoshaphat told them to tell Jehoram, "We should attack Moab through the desolate area in the land of Edom." 9 So the kings of Israel and Judah led their armies along that route. When they got to Edom, the king of Edom joined them with his army. They spent seven days marching around the southern end of the Sea of the Arabah. By that time, there was no water left for the soldiers or for the animals they had with them. 10 The king of Israel exclaimed, "This is a terrible situation! It seems that Yahweh has led us three kings and our armies here so that the Moabite army can defeat us!" 11 Jehoshaphat said, "We should ask Yahweh what we should do. Is one of his prophets here?" One of Jehoram's army officers replied, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He was Elijah's servant." 12 Jehoshaphat said, "Yahweh will give him a message for us." So those three kings went to speak with Elisha.

13 Elisha told the king of Israel, "You have no right to ask me for help! You worship Baal, just as your father and mother did, so ask Baal's prophets to help you." But Jehoram replied, "No, we want you to ask Yahweh because it seems that Yahweh has led us three kings and our armies here so that the Moabite army can defeat us." 14 Elisha replied, "I serve Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies. I swear by Yahweh that I am only helping you at all because you have Jehoshaphat king of Judah with you, and I respect him. 15 So bring someone to me who plays the harp." *So they did that, and* when the person played the harp, Yahweh gave Elisha the power to prophesy. 16 He said, "Yahweh is telling you to dig as many ditches as you can in this valley, 17 because he is going to make it rain too far away for you to see, but the water from the storm will flow into this valley. As a result, your soldiers, your livestock, and your pack animals will have plenty of water to drink. 18 Yahweh considers that an easy thing to do*, since he will also do something much greater*. He will enable you to defeat the army of Moab. 19 You will conquer every important city in Moab, including those that have high walls around them. You will cut down all their fruit trees. You will stop the water from flowing from their springs. And you will ruin their fertile fields by covering them with rocks." 20 Early the next morning, it was the time when the Israelites customarily offered a grain sacrifice. They suddenly saw water flowing toward them from the direction of Edom. It filled all the ditches they had dug.

21 The people of Moab learned that the three kings had come with their armies to fight against them. So they summoned all of their soldiers, including youths who were just learning to fight. The Moabite soldiers set up a defensive position at the border of their land with Edom. 22 When they got up early the next morning, they looked over to where the other armies were. They saw the sunrise reflecting on the water, and this made the water look red like blood.

23 They exclaimed, “Look, that is blood! Soldiers from those
three kingdoms must have fought and killed each other. As
a result, the armies must have destroyed each other! So let
us go and take their weapons and possessions!” 24 So they
went to the area where the soldiers from Israel, Judah, and
Edom had set up their tents. But those soldiers attacked the
Moabite soldiers and forced them to retreat. The Israelite,
Judean, and Edomite soldiers pursued them into the land
of Moab. They began attacking the people there. 25 Those
soldiers destroyed the Moabite cities. Whenever they passed
fertile fields, they threw many rocks onto them. They stopped
the water from flowing from the springs. They cut down
the fruit trees. Finally *the Moabite capital of* Kir Hareseth
was the only city they had not destroyed. Israelite, Judean,
and Edomite soldiers threw stones from slings from places
all around the city and killed many of the defenders on its
walls. 26 The king of Moab realized that his enemies were
defeating him. So he gathered 700 soldiers who fought well
with swords. He led them to try to fight their way through
to where the king of Edom was leading his soldiers. But they
were not able to do that. 27 Then the king of Moab took his
oldest son, who would have become the next king after he
died, and offered him as a burnt sacrifice. He did this on top
of the city wall *so people could see it*. Then there was great
anger against the attacking soldiers, and they left and all
went back to their own countries.

4 One day the widow of one of the young prophets came
to Elisha and pleaded with him. She told him, “My
husband, who was one of the prophets you were training,
has died. You know very well that he revered Yahweh
greatly. But now someone who lent him money has come
and is demanding repayment. *I can not pay him back, so*
he is threatening to take away two of my children as slaves *as*
his payment!” 2 Elisha replied, “What can I do to help you?
Tell me, what do you have in your house?” She replied, “I
only have a container of olive oil.” 3 Elisha said, “Go out
to your neighbors and borrow from them as many empty
containers as you can. 4 Bring the containers home. Once
you and your children are inside the house, shut the door.
Then pour olive oil from your container into the containers
you have borrowed. When each one is full, set it aside and
start filling another one.” 5 So she left Elisha *and borrowed*
as many containers as she could from her neighbors. Then she
gathered her children inside her house and shut the door.
Her children kept bringing the containers to her, and she
kept pouring the oil from her container into them. 6 When
she had filled a certain container*, her children did not bring*
her another one. So she called to one of her sons, “Bring me
another container!” But he answered, “There are no more
containers!” Right then the olive oil stopped flowing. 7 She
went to Elisha and told him what had happened. He told
her, “Now go and sell the oil. With the money you get, repay
what you owe. There will be enough money left over for you
to keep buying food for yourself and your children.”

8 One day Elisha went to the city of Shunem. There was a
wealthy woman who lived there *with her husband*. That day
she insisted that Elisha come to her house for a meal. *So he*
did, and after that, every time Elisha was in Shunem, he went
to her house to eat a meal. 9 One day the woman told her
husband, “Please listen to me. I am sure that the man who
often comes here is a holy prophet. 10 Let us please build a
small room for him on our flat roof. Let us put a bed, a table,
a chair, and a lampstand in it. If we do that, whenever he
comes here, he will have a place to stay.” 11 One day Elisha
came to Shunem and went up to that room to rest. 12 He told
his servant Gehazi, “Tell the Shunamite woman *who lives*
here that I want to speak with her.” So Gehazi went to get
her. She came and stood just outside Elisha’s room. 13 Elisha
told Gehazi, “Tell her that we are both grateful for all the
kind things that she has done for us. Then ask her what we
can do for her. Ask whether she has a complaint that we may
bring to the king or the army commander on her behalf.”
When Gehazi told her that, she replied, “I am living peacefully
with my friends and neighbors *and have no complaint against*
any of them.” 14 *After she left,* Elisha asked, “So what we can
do for her?” Gehazi answered, “Well, she has no son, and
her husband is now too old to have children.” 15 Elisha told
Gehazi, “Ask her to come back again.” So Gehazi went to
get her. She came and stood in front of the open doorway
of Elisha’s room. 16 Elisha told her, “By this time next year
you will be holding your infant son in your arms.” But she
protested, “Sir, please do not deceive me by saying things
like that. After all, you are a prophet!”

17 But a few months later, the woman became pregnant,
and she gave birth to a son at that time the following year,
just as Elisha had predicted. 18 As the boy was growing up,
one day his father was working with the men who were
harvesting his grain. The boy went out to the field to be with
his father. 19 Suddenly the boy exclaimed, “My head hurts
very badly!” His father told one of his servants, “Carry him
home to his mother.” 20 So the servant carried him home,
and his mother held him on her lap all that morning. But
then the boy died. 21 She carried him up to Elisha’s room
and laid him on the bed. She left him there and went out
and closed the door. 22 Then she asked her husband *without*
telling him that their son had died, “Please send me one of the
servants and a donkey. I want to go quickly to the prophet.
I will also come back quickly.” 23 Her husband responded,
“Why do you want to go to the prophet today? This is not the
day when we celebrate the new moon festival, and it is not
the Sabbath*, so he will not be leading any religious ceremonies*
that you can attend.” She replied, “Please just let me go,” *and*
he agreed. 24 So a servant came and saddled the donkey for
her. She told her servant, “Get the donkey moving, and let
us go. Do not slow down to make it easier for me to ride
unless I tell you to do so!” 25 So they traveled as quickly as
they could to Mount Carmel, where Elisha was. When Elisha
saw her in the distance, he told Gehazi, “Look, here comes
that Shunammite woman!

26 Run to her and ask her if everything is all right with her
and her husband and with her child!” *So Gehazi ran to her*
and asked her, but she told him that she did not want to stop
to answer his questions. 27 When she came to where Elisha
was, she bowed down and grasped Elisha’s feet *to show that*
she desperately wanted him to do something for her. Gehazi
came over to push her away, but Elisha told him, “Let her
stay here! She is feeling great distress about something, but
Yahweh has not told me at all what it is.” 28 Then she told
Elisha, “Sir, I never asked you to enable me to have a son.
In fact, when you told me that I would have a son, I asked
you not to deceive me.” 29 Then Elisha *realized that something*
must have happened to her son, so he told Gehazi, “Tuck your
cloak into your belt *so that you can run fast*. Take my staff
with you and go to her home. Do not stop to talk to anyone
on the way. *Go quickly to where her son is and* lay the staff on
the child’s face *so that Yahweh may cause him to become alive*
again.” 30 But the boy’s mother said, “I swear by Yahweh and

your own life that I will not leave here and go home until you agree to come with me." So Elisha returned with her to her home. 31 Gehazi hurried quickly to the woman's house ahead of them. When he arrived there, he laid the staff on the boy's face. But he did not say anything, and he did not react when Gehazi spoke to him. So Gehazi went back and met Elisha, who was on his way to Shunem. He told him, "The boy did not become alive again."

32 When Elisha arrived at the house, he found the boy lying dead on the bed in his room *where his mother had put him*. 33 Elisha went into the room by himself and shut the door. Then he prayed to Yahweh. 34 Then he climbed onto the bed and lay down on top of the boy's body. He put his mouth on the boy's mouth. Then he put his eyes on the boy's eyes. Then he put his hands on the boy's hands. He stretched his body out over the boy's body. After that, the boy's body started to become warm. 35 Elisha went back down to the house and walked around for a while. Then he went back up to the room. He stretched his body out over the boy's body again. The boy sneezed seven times, and then he opened his eyes! 36 Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. He told him, "Call the boy's mother." So Gehazi went and got her, and when she came to the room, Elisha told her, "You may take your son." 37 She came into the room and bowed down low in front of Elisha *to honor him and thank him*. Then she picked up her son and took him back into her house.

38 Then Elisha returned to Gilgal. At that time, there was a famine in that area. One day many young prophets had gathered to hear Elisha's teaching. He told his servant, "Put a large pot on the fire and make some stew for these men." 39 One of the prophets went outside to look for wild vegetables *to add to the stew*. He found a wild vine that had many gourds on it. He collected as many as he could hold in the fold of his robe and brought them back. No one there knew that those gourds were poisonous, so he cut them up and added them to the stew. 40 Those who prepared the stew served it to the prophets. But after the prophets had tasted it, *they knew something bad was in it, so* they cried out, "Sir, there is something in this stew that would kill us *if we ate more of it*!" So they could not eat it. 41 Elisha said, "Bring me some flour." *They brought him some, and* he threw it in the pot. Then he said, "Go ahead and serve this. The prophets can now eat it safely." So they ate it, and it did not harm them.

42 One day a man from the city of Baal Shalishah brought Elisha an offering from the first grain he harvested that year. He brought 20 loaves of barley bread and a sack of fresh grain. Elisha told his servant, "Give this food to the group of prophets so that they will have something to eat." 43 But his servant responded, "I will not be able to feed a hundred prophets with only that much food." But Elisha replied, "Serve it as a meal to the prophets, because Yahweh says that there will be enough food for everyone. In fact, there will be more than enough!" 44 So he served the food to the prophets. They all ate as much they wanted, and there was more than enough food. That was just what Yahweh had promised would happen.

5 A certain man whose name was Naaman was the commander of the Aramean army. Yahweh had enabled him to win many victories for Aram, and so the king of Aram admired and honored him. Naaman was a great warrior. Unfortunately, he also had leprosy. 2 Some groups of Aramean soldiers went on raids into the land of Israel. They captured a young girl and brought her back to Aram. She became a servant of Naaman's wife. 3 One day that girl told her, "I wish that my master Naaman could go to the prophet who lives in the city of Samaria. That prophet would heal him of his leprosy." 4 *Naaman's wife told her husband* what the girl from Israel had said. So Naaman went and reported that to the king. 5 The king told him, "Very well, go right away to the land of Israel. I will write a letter for you to bring to the king of Israel *in which I will ask him to help you*." So Naaman went to Israel. He brought with him *as a gift* 330 kilograms of silver, 66 kilograms of gold, and 10 sets of expensive clothing. 6 When Naaman arrived, he gave the king of Israel the letter. The king of Aram had written in it, "I am writing this letter to introduce my army commander Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy." 7 When the king read the letter, he tore his clothes *to show his distress*. He told his officials, "I am not God! I am not able to cause people to live or to die! So this man should not be asking me to cure someone of leprosy. If you think about it, the king of Aram must want a reason to attack us *and he will pretend to be offended if I do not do what he asks*."

8 The prophet Elisha heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes. So he sent a message to the king. He told him, "You did not need to feel such distress that you tore your clothes. Send Naaman to me. He will learn that there is a prophet in Israel *through whom Yahweh can heal him*." 9 So Naaman went with his horses and chariots to Elisha's house, He waited outside the door. 10 But *rather than coming out to speak to Naaman,* Elisha sent a messenger to tell him, "Go to the Jordan River. Go down into its water seven times to wash yourself. Then your skin will become healthy again. You will no longer have leprosy." 11 But this made Naaman furious, and he left Elisha's house. He *stopped and* told his servants, "I expected him to come out of his house and stand in front of me. I was sure that he would ask Yahweh his God to heal me. I expected him to wave his hand over the area where I have leprosy and heal me! 12 Surely the Abanah River and the Pharpar River in Damascus have better water than any river in Israel! The prophet should have told me to wash in those rivers in order to become healthy again!" Naaman was so furious that he started to leave again. 13 But his servants came to him, and one of them said, "Sir, if that prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would certainly have done it. So you should certainly be willing to do a simple thing such as he described when he told you to wash yourself in the Jordan River in order to become clean." 14 So Naaman went to the Jordan River and went down into its water seven times, as the prophet had instructed him to do. Then his skin became smooth once again, like the skin of a young child. He no longer had leprosy.

15 Then Naaman and the soldiers who were with him returned to Elisha's house. This time Elisha met with them personally. Naaman told him, "Now I know that the God whom you Israelites worship is the only true God anywhere. Please accept these gifts that I have brought you." 16 But Elisha replied, "I swear by Yahweh, the God whom I serve, that I will not accept any gifts from you." Naaman urged him to accept something, but Elisha refused to accept anything. 17 Then Naaman said, "All right, but I have one request. From now on, I am going to offer sacrifices only to Yahweh, not to any other god. So please allow me to take back with me as much soil from Israel as two mules can carry *so that I can spread out that soil to make a place where I can worship Yahweh*. 18 But there is one thing *I will have to do* for which

I ask Yahweh to forgive me. When my master, *the king of Aram,* goes into the temple of Rimmon and bows down *to the idol* there, he needs to lean on my arm for support. That requires me to bow down as well*, but I will not intend that as an act of worship*. I ask Yahweh to forgive me for bowing down *to the idol of Rimmon*." 19 Elisha replied, "*Yahweh will forgive you, so* you may return home without worrying about that." So Naaman and his servants started to travel home.

20 But then Elisha's servant Gehazi said *to himself*, "My master Elisha should have accepted the gifts that this Aramean man Naaman brought. I swear by Yahweh that I am going to catch up with him and get something from him." 21 So Gehazi ran to catch up with Naaman. When Naaman saw that a man was running after him, he stopped the chariot in which he was riding and climbed down from it in order to speak with the man. *When Gehazi arrived,* he asked him, "Is everything all right?" 22 Gehazi replied, "Yes, everything is all right. But two young prophets from the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim live have just arrived to stay with Elisha for a while. He wants to give them something. So he sent me to ask you for a disk of *33 kilograms of* silver and two sets of clothing." 23 Naaman replied, "Certainly, and I hope you will accept two silver disks*, one for each of those prophets*." *Gehazi pretended to be reluctant, but* Naaman urged him to accept the second disk*, and Gehazi agreed*. So Naaman had his servants tie up a silver disk and a set of clothing in each of two bags. He instructed two of his servants to carry these bags back to Elisha, and they walked ahead of Gehazi as they returned. 24 When they arrived at a certain hill *in Samaria*, Gehazi took the bags from the servants and sent them back to Naaman. He brought the bags into his own house *and hid them there*. 25 Then he went to Elisha *and acted as if nothing had happened*. Elisha asked him, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" Gehazi replied, "I did not go anywhere." 26 Elisha told him, "You must realize that my spirit was there with you when Naaman got out of his chariot to talk with you! This is certainly no time to accept gifts of silver or clothing and *sell them to buy* olive groves or vineyards or sheep or oxen or male and female servants! 27 Because you have done this, you and all of your future descendants will have leprosy just as Naaman did!" Before Gehazi even left the room, he became a leper. His skin became as white as snow.

6 One day representatives of the group of prophets *in Jericho* came to Elisha, and one of them said on their behalf, "Listen, *our community has grown, so* this hall where we meet with you is now too small to hold all of us. 2 Allow us to go to the forest in the Jordan River valley and cut down some trees. Then each of us will carry some of the wood to a site where we can build a new meeting hall." And Elisha told them, "Very well, you may go and do that." 3 The one who was speaking on behalf of all of the prophets told Elisha, "Please agree to come with us." Elisha replied, "Very well, I will come with you." 4 So they went together to the Jordan River valley. The prophets began cutting down trees. 5 But while one of them was cutting down a tree, the axe head *that he had secured to a wooden handle came loose and* fell into the water. He cried out to Elisha, "This is terrible! I had to borrow that axe head*, and it will be very difficult for me to afford to replace it*." 6 Elisha replied, "Where did the axe head fall into the water?" The man showed him the place, and then Elisha cut off a stick and threw it into the water at that place. The axe head rose to the surface of the water. 7 Elisha said, "There is your axe head. You can pull it out of the water." And the man reached out and pulled the axe head out of the water.

8 At this time the king of Aram was planning to attack Israel. After discussing various possibilities with his officers, he told them to have his soldiers set up their tents in a certain place. 9 But Elisha sent messengers to tell the king of Israel, "The Aramean soldiers are going to set up their tents there, so stay away from that place." 10 The king of Israel sent soldiers to the place that Elisha had warned him about. *The soldiers discovered that the Arameans were there,* so the king stayed away from there. This happened repeatedly. 11 The king of Aram became very angry about this. He summoned his army officers and told them, "I demand to know which one of you is revealing our plans to the king of Israel!" 12 One of his officers answered, "Your Majesty, it is not any of us. Instead, there is a prophet whose name is Elisha who lives in Israel. He tells the king of Israel even our most secret plans *because Yahweh reveals them to him*." 13 The king of Aram replied, "Go and find out where he is. When you do, I will send some men there to capture him." Someone told him, "We know that he is in the city of Dothan."

14 So the king sent a large group of soldiers to Dothan with their horses and chariots. They came at night *so that no one would know they had come* and surrounded the city *so that no one could escape*. 15 Early the next morning, Elisha's servant got up and went outside the house. He saw that Aramean soldiers with their horses and chariots were surrounding the city. The servant *went back inside the house and* exclaimed to Elisha, "Oh, no! Sir, they have trapped us!" 16 Elisha replied, "Do not be afraid! There are many more soldiers defending us than there are attacking us." 17 Then Elisha prayed, "Yahweh, please enable my servant to see *the spiritual army that is defending us*!" So Yahweh enabled the servant to see spiritual realities. When he looked out, he saw that a great number of fiery horses and chariots were protecting Elisha by surrounding the hill on which people had built the city of Dothan. 18 The Aramean soldiers started to advance toward him. So Elisha prayed, "Yahweh, please make all these soldiers blind!" Yahweh answered his prayer and made them blind. 19 Then Elisha told them, "You have taken the wrong road, and so you have come to the wrong city. Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are searching for." But he led them to the city of Samaria.

20 Once they got inside the city, Elisha prayed, "Yahweh, please enable these soldiers to see again!" And Yahweh enabled them to see again. When they looked around, they realized that they were inside Samaria. 21 When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Sir, should I order my soldiers to kill them all?" 22 Elisha replied, "No, do not kill them. If your army captured enemy soldiers in a battle, you would not kill them. Give these men something to eat and drink, and then allow them to return to their king." 23 So the king of Israel told his servants to serve a big feast to them. Once they had eaten and drunk all they wanted, he sent them back home. They returned to the king of Aram *and told him what had happened*. So after that, groups of Aramean soldiers stopped going on raids into the land of Israel.

24 However, some time later, Ben Hadad king of Aram assembled his entire army and led it to the city of Samaria. His soldiers surrounded the city *and did not let anyone go into or out of it*. 25 As a result, soon there was almost no food in the city. People were paying nearly a kilogram of silver for a donkey's head. They were even paying 55 grams of

silver for about a cup of dove's dung. 26 One day the king of
Israel was walking on top of the city wall. A woman cried
up to him, "Your Majesty, please help me!" 27 He replied,
"Yahweh will have to help you. I certainly can not help you.
We have no grain or wine left in the city!" 28 But then he
asked, "What is your problem?" She replied, "Several days
ago, that woman over there told me that *because we had no
other food,* I should give up my baby boy so that we could
kill and eat him. She promised that if I agreed to that, we
could kill and eat her baby boy the next day. 29 So we *killed
my son and* boiled his flesh and ate it. The next day, I told
her to give up her son so that we could kill and eat him. But
she hid her son *so that we would not do that*." 30 When the
king heard what the woman said, he tore his robe *to show
that he was very upset*. The people who were standing close
to the wall were able to look up and see that the king was
wearing rough cloth underneath his robe *to show Yahweh
how sorry he was for his sins and those of the people*. 31 The
king exclaimed, "I am going to order my soldiers to execute
Elisha today by cutting off his head! If I do not do that, may
God kill me instead and do other terrible things to me!"

32 So the king sent a soldier to execute Elisha. Elisha
was sitting in his house with some of the elders of Samaria.
Before the soldier arrived, Elisha spoke to the elders. He
told them, "Yahweh has shown me that *the king of Israel,*
that violent person, has sent a soldier here to kill me. Listen,
when the soldier arrives, do not open the door. Instead, hold
the door shut to keep him out. The king will be arriving
shortly after that soldier." 33 While he was still speaking,
the soldier arrived*, and the king arrived right after him*. The
king told Elisha, "Listen, Yahweh has caused us to have this
trouble. So I am not going to wait any longer for him to help
us."

7 Elisha told everyone there, "Listen to what Yahweh says.
He says that at this time tomorrow, at the marketplace
here in Samaria, you will be able to buy six liters of good
flour for about ten grams of silver, and you will be able to
buy twelve liters of barley for about ten grams of silver."
2 The officer accompanying the king told Elijah, "That could
not happen even if Yahweh opened the windows of the sky
and sent grain down to us!" Elisha responded, "*Because you
have said that,* you will see it happen, but you will not eat
any of the food!"

3 Now there were four men who had leprosy who were
sitting outside the gate of the city of Samaria. They told each
other, "We should not stay here until we starve to death.
4 If we go into the city, we will die there, since there is no
food there. If we remain sitting here, we will die here. So
let us go and surrender to the army of Aram. If they kill us,
we will die. But they might give us food. Then we would
live." 5 So when it started to get dark, those four men went
to the place where the Aramean soldiers had set up their
tents. But when they arrived at that place, they discovered
that no soldiers were there. 6 What had happened was that
Yahweh had caused the army of Aram to hear something that
sounded like a large army approaching with chariots and
horses. The Aramean soldiers told each other, "Listen! The
king of Israel has hired the kings of Egypt and the Hittites to
come and attack us with their armies!" 7 The Aramean solders
were very afraid that enemy soldiers would kill them if they
stayed where they were. So they all ran away, even though
it was getting dark. They left their tents and their horses
and donkeys behind. In fact, they did not take anything with
them from the camp. 8 *That was why no one was there* when
those four men who had leprosy arrived at the place where
the soldiers of Aram had set up their tents. So they went
into one tent and *found food and valuable things in it. So* they
ate and drank what was there, and they took the silver and
gold and clothes. They left that tent and hid those things.
Then they came back and went into another tent. They took
the things from there, and they went away and hid them as
well.

9 But then they told each other, "Something very good
has happened today, but we are not telling anyone about
it. That is the wrong thing to do at a time like this. If we
wait until it gets light in the morning*, then other people will
discover what has happened, and* they will punish us *for not
telling anyone*. We should go right now and tell the king's
officials what has happened!" 10 So they went to the guards
at the city gates and called out to them, "We went to where
the army of Aram had set up their tents, but we did not see
or hear anyone there. However, their horses and donkeys
were still where they had tied them up, and their tents were
still there too." 11 The guards shouted the news, and some
people who heard it went to the palace and reported it to the
king's officials. 12 It was still night, but the king got out of
bed and told his officials, "The Arameans are trying to trick
us! I will tell you how. They know that we are starving here,
so they have left their camp and are hiding in the fields.
They think that we will *discover that the camp is empty and*
leave the city *to get the food they have left in it*. Then they
will *come out of hiding and* capture us and conquer the city!"
13 But one of his officials said, "Please let us send out some
men on five of our horses that are still alive. Those men
can go and see what has actually happened. *If the Arameans
are hiding in ambush and kill them,* they will be no worse
off than the other Israelites who stay here in the city. After
all, all of us Israelites here are about to starve to death."
14 The king agreed to send some men to find out where the
army of Aram actually was. There were enough horses alive
to pull two chariots. So the men went out on those. 15 All
along the road, those men found clothing and weapons that
the Arameans had discarded while they were running away.
The men went as far as the Jordan River *and still saw no
enemy soldiers, so they knew they had left Israel and gone back
to Aram*. So the men returned to the king and reported what
they had seen.

16 Then many of the people of Samaria left the city and
went to where the army of Aram had set up their tents.
They entered all the tents and took everything. *The Arameans
had left much grain behind, and* as a result, people could
buy six liters of good flour for about ten grams of silver,
and they could buy twelve liters of barley for about ten
grams of silver. That was exactly what Yahweh had said
would happen. 17 The king appointed the officer who usually
accompanied him to control the flow of people through the
city gate. But the people who were rushing through the gate
knocked him over and trampled on him. As a result, he died.
That was just what Elisha had told him would happen when
he came to Elisha's house with the king. 18 Elisha had told
the king, "At this time tomorrow at the marketplace here in
Samaria, you will be able to buy six liters of good flour for
about ten grams of silver. You will be able to buy twelve
liters of barley for about ten grams of silver." 19 The captain
had replied, "That could not happen even if Yahweh opened
the windows of the sky *and sent grain down to us*!" Elisha
had responded, "*Because you have said that,* you will see it

happen, but you will not eat any of the food!" 20 And that
is what happened to him. The people who were rushing
through the gate *knocked him over and* trampled on him. As
a result, he died.

8 Several years earlier, Elisha had spoken to the
Shunammite woman whose son he had made live again.
He had told her, "Yahweh is going to allow a famine to occur
in Israel. This famine will last for seven years. So you and
your family should go and live somewhere else for a while
where there will be food to eat." 2 The woman had done what
Elisha told her to do. She and her family had gone to live
in the region of Philistia for seven years. 3 After those seven
years were over, she and her family returned to Israel. *By this
time someone else was living in her house and on her land, so*
the woman went to the king to ask him to order that person
to return her house and her land to her. 4 *Just as she arrived,*
the king was speaking with Gehazi, Elisha's servant. The
king was saying to him, "Tell me about all the miracles that
Elisha has done." 5 Just as Gehazi was telling the king how
Elisha had caused the woman's son to become alive again,
that woman came in and asked the king to enable her to get
her house and land back. Gehazi exclaimed, "Your Majesty,
this is the woman I was just telling you about, and this is
her son, whom Elisha caused to become alive again!" 6 So
the king asked her about this, and she told him the whole
story of what Elisha had done. Then the king assigned one
of his officials to help her. He told him, "Make sure that this
woman gets her house and land back. Also give her as many
crops as grew on her land while she was away."

7 Later Elisha traveled to the city of Damascus. At that
time, King Ben Hadad of Aram was very sick. When someone
told him that Elisha had come to Damascus, 8 the king told
his official Hazael, "Go and speak with Elisha. Bring him a
gift *from me*, and ask him to ask Yahweh if I will recover from
this illness." 9 So Hazael went to speak with Elisha. As a gift,
he brought him many of the goods that people produced in
Damascus. It took 40 camels to carry everything he brought.
When Hazael met with Elisha, he told him, "Your friend Ben
Hadad, the king of Aram, has sent me to ask you whether
he will recover from his illness." 10 Elisha told Hazael, "You
may go back and tell him that he will surely recover from
this illness. However, Yahweh has shown me that he is going
to die *some other way*." 11 Then Elisha looked steadily at
Hazael for a long time. That made Hazael feel embarrassed.
Then Elisha started to cry. 12 Hazael asked, "Sir, why are you
crying?" Elisha replied, "Because Yahweh has enabled me
to know the terrible things that you will do to the people of
Israel. Your soldiers will burn down their cities that now have
walls around them. They will kill their best young soldiers
in battle. They will throw their babies against stones to kill
them. And they will use their swords to split open the bellies
of their pregnant women *and kill the children in their wombs*."
13 Hazael replied, "I am an insignificant person. I do not
have the power to do the things you have described." Elisha
replied, "Yahweh has revealed to me that you will become
the king of Aram." 14 Then Hazael left Elisha and returned to
the king. The king asked Hazael, "What did Elisha tell you?"
Hazael replied, "He told me that you would surely recover."
15 But the next day*, while the king was sleeping,* Hazael got a
thick cloth and soaked it in water. Then he spread it over
the king's face so that he would not be able to breathe. As
a result, he died. Then Hazael became the king of Aram
instead of Ben Hadad.

16 After Joram son of Ahab had been ruling Israel for
almost five years, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat became one
of the rulers of Judah. Jehoshaphat continued to be a ruler
himself. 17 Jehoram was 32 years old when he became a
ruler, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. 18 Jehoram's
wife was the daughter of King Ahab. As a result, he behaved
just as the kings of Israel behaved who were descendants
of Ahab. He did many things that Yahweh had told the
Israelites were evil. 19 However, Yahweh had promised his
servant David that his descendants would always be kings.
So Yahweh did not want to allow the enemies of the kingdom
of Judah to destroy it.

20 During the time when Jehoram ruled, the Edomites
rebelled against Judah. They appointed their own king. 21 So
Joram went with his army and all of his chariots to the
city of Zair. The commanders of the Edomite army came
and surrounded them with their chariots. Jehoram had to
make a *surprise* attack at night*in order to escape*. Then the
regular soldiers ran away and went home*, so Joram was
not able to reconquer Edom*. 22 Since that time, Judah has no
longer controlled Edom. Around that same time, the people
of the city of Libnah also rebelled against Judah. 23 The
book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened
during their reigns describes further things that Jehoram did.
24 Then Joram died, and the Judeans buried him in the part
of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is
where people had buried his ancestors. Joram's son Ahaziah
became the next king.

25 After Joram son of Ahab had been ruling Israel for
almost 12 years, Ahaziah son of Jehoram became the king
of Judah. 26 Ahaziah was 22 years old when he became the
king. He ruled in Jerusalem for one year. His mother's name
was Athaliah. Her father was *Ahab, the son of* King Omri of
Israel. 27 Because Ahaziah's mother was a daughter of Ahab,
he behaved just as the kings of Israel behaved who were
descendants of Ahab. He did many things that Yahweh had
told the Israelites were evil. 28 Ahaziah led his army to join
King Jehoram of Israel and his army to fight against the
army of King Hazael of Aram. Their armies started fighting
at the city of Ramoth Gilead. The Aramean soldiers wounded
Jehoram in the battle there. 29 So King Joram left Ramah,
where his army had been fighting against the army of King
Hazael of Aram. Because the Arameans had wounded him, he
went back to the city of Jezreel to recover from his wounds.
King Ahaziah of Judah learned that he had gone there to
recover. So he went to Jezreel to visit him.

9 Meanwhile, the prophet Elisha summoned one of the
young prophets he was training. He told him, "Tuck
your cloak into your belt *so that you can run fast*. Go to
the city of Ramoth Gilead. Take this jar of olive oil with
you. 2 When you arrive there, look for a man whose name
is Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi. When you find
him, ask him to come with you into a private room, away
from his companions. 3 Then pour the olive oil on his head
and tell him, 'Yahweh declares that he is appointing you to
be the king of Israel.' Then open the door and run away as
quickly as you can." 4 So that young prophet went to Ramoth
Gilead. 5 When he arrived, he found the officers of the army
meeting together *in the courtyard of a house*. He said, "Sir, I
have a message for you." Jehu replied, "Which one of us is
the message for?" The young prophet replied, "It is for you,
sir." 6 So Jehu got up and went with the young prophet into
the house. There the young prophet poured the olive oil on

Jehu's head. Then he told him, "Yahweh, the God whom
we Israelites worship, declares that he is appointing you
to be the king of his Israelite people. 7 Ahab's wife Jezebel
murdered many of his prophets and many other Israelites
who worshiped him. To punish them for these murders,
Yahweh wants you to kill the entire family of Ahab. You
formerly served him as a military commander. 8 Everyone
in Ahab's family must die. So kill all of the males in his
household, whether they are family members or servants,
no matter where they live in the kingdom of Israel. 9 Earlier,
I had people destroy the families of Jeroboam son of Nebat
and Baasha son of Ahijah *because those kings were so wicked*.
I want you to destroy the family of Ahab in the same way.
10 When Jezebel dies, no one will bury her body. Instead,
dogs will eat her body on the property near the city of Jezreel
that belonged to Naboth." After the young prophet said this,
he went out the door and ran away.

11 When Jehu came out of the house to where the other
officers were, one of them asked him, "Is everything all
right? Why did that crazy person come and speak with you?"
Jehu replied, "You know very well what kinds of silly things
young prophets like him say." 12 They responded, "No, he
must have come to tell you something important. Tell us
what he said!" Jehu replied, "All right, this is what he said.
He told me that Yahweh said that he was appointing me to
be the king of Israel." 13 They had Jehu stand in a high place
where people could see him. Then they all quickly took off
their cloaks and spread them on the ground beneath his feet
to honor him. They blew on a ram's horn *to show that they
were making an important announcement* and shouted, "Jehu
is now the king!"

14 Then Jehu and the other commanders made plans to
kill Joram so that Jehu could replace him as king. King Joram
and his army had been defending Ramoth Gilead against the
attacking army of Hazael king of Aram. 15 But the Arameans
had wounded Joram as he was fighting against their army.
Joram had returned to the city of Jezreel to recover from
his wounds. Jehu told the other commanders, "If you really
want me to be king, make sure that no one leaves this city
to warn the people of Jezreel *that I am planning to go there*."

16 Then Jehu and his officers got into their chariots and
rode to Jezreel. That was where Joram was still recovering.
King Ahaziah of Judah was there visiting Jehoram.

17 A lookout was standing on top of the tower in Jezreel.
He saw Jehu and his men approaching. He called out, "I
see a lot of men approaching!" King Jehoram *heard what the
watchman said, so he* told his soldiers, "Send someone out on a
horse to ask them whether they are coming peacefully." 18 So
a man rode out on a horse to meet Jehu. The man told him,
"The king asks whether you are coming peacefully." Jehu
replied, "I do not have to tell you that. Get into the group of
men behind me *and follow me to the city*!" The lookout in the
tower *saw this and* reported that the messenger had reached
the group of men who were approaching *and had spoken
with them,* but he was not coming back ahead of them. 19 So
King Jehoram sent another messenger to tell Jehu that he
hoped he was coming peacefully. Again Jehu replied, "I do
not have to tell you that. Get into the group of men behind
me *and follow me to the city*!" 20 Then the watchman reported
again, "That messenger also reached them, but he is not
coming back ahead of them. And the leader of that group of
men must be Jehu son of Nimshi, because he is driving his
chariot so recklessly!"

21 Jehoram told one of his attendants, "Get my chariot
ready for me." So his attendants did that. Then King Jehoram
and King Ahaziah each rode out in his own chariot toward
Jehu. They met Jehu just as he arrived on the property that
had belonged to Naboth. 22 When Jehoram met Jehu, he
asked him, "Have you come here peacefully, Jehu?" Jehu
replied, "There can be no peace while *you and* your mother
Jezebel are leading the Israelites to worship so many false
gods and practicing so much witchcraft!" 23 Jehoram cried
out, "Ahaziah, Jehu is rebelling against me!" Then Jehoram
turned his chariot around and tried to escape. 24 But Jehu
got his bow and shot an arrow that hit Jehoram in the back
between his shoulder blades. The arrow entered Jehoram's
body and went right through his heart. He slumped down
dead in his chariot. 25 Then Jehu told his captain Bidkar,
"Take his body and throw it here onto the field that belonged
to Naboth. Remember what happened when you and I were
riding together behind King Jehoram's father Ahab. Yahweh
spoke about Ahab *through Elijah*. 26 He said that he had
seen Ahab murder Naboth and his sons the day before. He
solemnly promised that he would punish Ahab right here in
this same field! So take Jehoram's body and throw it onto
this field! That will make happen exactly what Yahweh said
would happen."

27 When King Ahaziah saw what happened, he left the
property through a pavilion that led into the adjacent palace
gardens. But Jehu *and his men* chased him. Jehu told his
men, "Shoot him as well!" *So they shot him with arrows* while
he was riding in his chariot on the road up to Gur, near
the city of Ibleam. Ahaziah continued riding in his chariot
until he reached the city of Megiddo, but he died there.
28 His officials brought his body back to Jerusalem in his
chariot. The Judeans buried him in the tombs in the part
of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That was
where they had also buried his ancestors.

29 Ahaziah had become the king of Judah when Joram
son of Ahab had been ruling Israel for almost 11 years.

30 Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel the queen
mother heard what had happened, she put on eye makeup
and combed her hair to make it beautiful. Then she looked
out the window of the palace toward the street below. 31 As
Jehu was entering the city gate, she called out to him, "Your
life will not be peaceful! You will be just like Zimri, who also
murdered his king!" 32 Jehu looked up toward the window
and called out, "Will anyone there help me?" Two or three
palace officials looked down at him from windows. 33 Jehu
told them, "Throw her down!" So they threw her down, and
Jehu ordered his men to drive their chariots over her body.
This killed her, and some of her blood splattered on the city
wall and on the horses that were pulling the chariots. 34 Then
Jehu went into the palace and had a meal there. Then he told
some of his men, "Jezebel brought Yahweh's curse on herself
through the idolatry and violence she committed. However, she
was a king's daughter*, and so she should receive a proper
burial*. Please take her body and bury it." 35 But when they
went to get her body to bury it, the only things left were
her skull, her feet, and the front part of her hands. 36 When
they reported this to Jehu, he said, "That is what Yahweh
said would happen!" He said through his servant Elijah that
dogs would eat Jezebel's body on the property that belonged
to Naboth. 37 Dung dissolves into the ground *so that no one
recognizes it anymore*. Yahweh said that in the same way, no
one would be able to recognize Jezebel's body. They would
just know that she died somewhere on Naboth's property.

10 There were 70 members of King Ahab's family living
in Samaria. Many of the officials who had served in
the royal palace in Jezreel had fled to Samaria after Jehu
rebelled. Jehu wrote a letter and sent copies of it to those
officials, to the elders of the city of Samaria, and to the people
who were caring for Ahab's family. This is what he wrote:
2 "Jehoram's sons are there with you*, and ordinarily one of
them would succeed him as king*. You are in a city that has walls
around it, and you have chariots, horses, and weapons. So as
soon as you receive this letter, 3 decide which of Jehoram's
sons you think is the most qualified to be the next king
of Israel. Proclaim his as your king, and then prepare to
fight to defend him." 4 But when they received those letters,
what Jehu had written terrified them. They said, "When two
kings, Jehoram and Ahaziah, fought against him, he killed
them. We are just ordinary people. So if we try to fight him,
he will certainly kill us." 5 So the officer in charge of the
palace, the mayor of the city, the elders of the city, and the
people who were caring for Ahab's family wrote back to
Jehu. They told him, "We are willing to be your subjects.
We will do whatever you tell us to do. We will not appoint
anyone to become our king. Do whatever you think is best."
6 So Jehu wrote back to them and said, "If you accept me as
your king and are ready to obey me, kill all of King Ahab's
male descendants. Cut off their heads and bring them to me
here in Jezreel by this time tomorrow." Now the leaders of
the city of Samaria were rearing 70 male descendants of
King Ahab. 7 When a messenger brought Jehu's letter to the
leaders of Samaria and they read it, they killed all 70 of
Ahab's male descendants and cut off their heads. They put
their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel. 8 A
messenger came to Jehu and told him, "They have brought
the heads of Ahab's male descendants." Jehu responded,
"Put their heads in two piles at the city gate. Leave them
there until tomorrow morning." 9 The next morning he went
out and stood at the city gate. He told the people who had
gathered there, "I am the one who plotted against King
Jehoram and killed him. You are not guilty of doing that.
And I am not guilty of killing all of these descendants of
Ahab. 10 Instead, Yahweh has done what he said through his
servant Elijah that he would do. As a result, you can be sure
that everything Yahweh said would happen to Ahab's family
has in fact happened." 11 Then Jehu executed all the other
relatives of Ahab in Jezreel. He also executed all of Ahab's
officers, close friends, and priests. He did not allow any of
them to remain alive.

12 Then Jehu left Jezreel and went toward Samaria. On his
way there, he came to Beth Eked of the Shepherds. 13 There
he met some relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah. He asked
them, "Who are you?" They replied, "We are relatives of
King Ahaziah. We are going to Jezreel to visit the family of
Ahaziah's cousin King Jehoram, including the other children
of his mother Jezebel." 14 Jehu told his men, "Seize them!"
So they seized them, and they killed all of them at the pit
of Beth Eked. They killed all 42 of the relatives of Ahaziah
whom they met. They did not allow any of them to remain
alive.

15 Then Jehu continued to travel toward Samaria. He met
Jehonadab son of Rechab, who was coming to join him.
Jehu greeted him and told him, "I am willing to work with
you. Are you willing to work with me?" Jehonadab replied,
"Yes, I am." Jehu said, "If you are, then let us shake hands."
So they shook hands. Then Jehu helped him to get into his
chariot. 16 Jehu told him, "Come with me and let me show
you how eager I am for the Israelites to worship Yahweh." So
Jehu's men arranged for Jehonadab to ride with Jehu in his
chariot *to Samaria*. 17 When they arrived in Samaria, Jehu
killed all of Ahab's relatives who were still alive there. He
did not spare any of them. That was exactly what Yahweh
had told Elijah would happen to Ahab's family.

18 Then Jehu gathered the people of Samaria and told
them, "I am going to worship Baal much more than King
Ahab did. 19 So now summon all of Baal's prophets and
priests and all the other Israelites who worship Baal. I am
going to offer a great sacrifice to Baal, and I want all of them
to be there. I will have my soldiers execute any of them
who do not come to the sacrifice." But Jehu was deceiving
them. He was planning to kill everyone who worshiped Baal.
20 Then Jehu commanded, "Announce that we are going
to set aside a day to honor Baal." So his messengers went
out and proclaimed that there would be a celebration on
that day. 21 Jehu sent messengers throughout Israel telling
the people who worshiped Baal to gather in Samaria on a
certain day. All those people came that day. They went into
the huge temple of Baal and filled it from one side to the
other. 22 Then Jehu spoke to the person who took care of
the sacred robes in Baal's temple. He told him to bring out
enough robes so that everyone who worshiped Baal would
have one to wear. So the person did that. 23 Then Jehu went
into the temple of Baal with Jonadab. He told the people
who were worshipers of Baal, "Look around and make sure
that no one who worships Yahweh has come in. Only people
who worship Baal should be here." 24 Then he and Jonadab
prepared to offer *fellowship* sacrifices and burnt offerings
to Baal. But Jehu had stationed 80 of his men outside the
temple. He had told them, "I want you to kill all the people
who are in this temple. I will have my soldiers execute any
of you who allows any of them to escape!"

25 As soon as he had finished making the burnt offerings,
Jehu gave an order to the guards and officers he had stationed
outside. He told them, "Go in to the temple and kill the
worshipers of Baal! Do not allow any of them to escape!" So
the guards and officers went in and killed every one of them.
Then they dragged their bodies outside the temple. Then
they went into the inner room of the temple 26 and got the
sacred images of Baal that were there. They brought them
out of the temple and burned them. 27 They also smashed
the large stone pillar outside the temple that represented
Baal. Then they tore down the temple. People then used it
for a bathroom, and people continued to do that afterwards.
28 That is how Jehu ended the worship of Baal in Israel.

29 The one form of idolatry that Jehu allowed to continue
was the worship of the golden statues of calves in the cities
of Bethel and Dan. King Jeroboam had sinned by making
those statues, and he led the people of Israel to sin by
worshiping them. 30 Then Yahweh told Jehu, "I wanted
someone to destroy Ahab's descendants, and you did that.
Because you obeyed me and did what I had decided was
proper, I promise that your son, grandson, great-grandson,
and great-great-grandson will all be kings of Israel." 31 But
Jehu did not carefully and completely obey the laws of
Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worship. He did not
stop committing the sins that Jeroboam had committed,
which he had also led the Israelite people to commit.

32 At that time, Yahweh began to allow enemies to conquer
some of the territory of Israel. The army of King Hazael of
Aram conquered much of the Israelite territory 33 east of
the Jordan River. That was the region of Gilead, where the

tribes of Gad and Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh lived. Hazael conquered territory as far south as the city of Aroer by the Arnon Valley. He conquered further territory in Gilead as far north as Bashan. 34 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehu did, including the victories that his armies won. 35 Then Jehu died, and the Israelites buried him in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz became the next king. 36 Jehu had ruled in Samaria as the king of Israel for 28 years.

11 Someone told King Ahaziah's mother Athaliah that Jehu had killed her son. She ordered soldiers to kill all the members of Ahaziah's family who might become the next king. 2 But Jehosheba, who was King Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's half-sister, rescued Ahaziah's very young son Joash. She hid him and his nursemaid in a room in the palace where people kept bedding supplies. So the soldiers whom Athaliah had sent did not kill him when they killed the rest of Ahaziah's sons. 3 For the next six years, the priests hid Joash in Yahweh's temple with Jehosheba. Meanwhile, Athaliah ruled Judah.

4 But after those six years, Jehoiada *the high priest* sent messengers to get the officers who commanded the royal bodyguards and the palace guards. He told them to come to him at the temple. He had them make a solemn agreement with him *that they would do what he told them to do*. They swore an oath *by Yahweh* in his temple *that they would do this*. Then he showed them Joash, the son of King Ahaziah. 5 He gave them these instructions. "Many of you guards will come on duty on the Sabbath day. When you do, divide yourselves into three groups. One group must guard the palace building. 6 Another group must guard the Sur Gate. The other group must guard the gate where the palace guards usually stand. This will keep anyone from leaving the palace area. 7 Many others of you guards will be going off duty on the Sabbath day. *Instead of leaving,* you must guard the temple in two groups to protect young King Joash. 8 You must arm yourselves with your weapons and stand all around the king *to protect him*. Kill anyone who approaches your ranks *to try to harm the king*. If he goes anywhere, go with him."

9 The officers who commanded the guards did exactly what Jehoiada told them to do. Each one brought to Jehoiada the guards whom he commanded. This included the guards who were just finishing their work and those who were about to start their work on the Sabbath day. 10 Some spears and shields that had belonged to King David were in the temple. Jehoiada distributed them to the commanders of the guards *to give to their men*. 11 The guards took those weapons and formed a line all across the front of the temple. They stood between the temple building and the altar in its courtyard. In that way they provided complete protection for the king. 12 Then Jehoiada the high priest brought Joash out of the temple. He put a crown on his head and gave him a scroll that recorded Yahweh's laws. Then he poured olive oil on Joash's head and proclaimed that he was now the king. The people clapped their hands and shouted, "May King Joash rule for a long time!"

13 Athaliah heard the noise that the guards and the other people were making. So she came to the temple where the people had gathered. 14 She saw Joash, the new king, standing next to one of the big pillars on the temple porch. That was where new kings customarily stood. She saw that the commanders of the palace guards and musicians playing trumpets were standing next to him. She heard a crowd of ordinary Israelites shouting joyfully. Some of them were blowing trumpets. She tore her clothes *to show her distress* and shouted, "You are traitors! You have betrayed me!" 15 Jehoiada told the officers who commanded the guards, whom he had put in charge of the armed men that day, "Have the guards take her away from the temple. Kill anyone who tries to rescue her!" He said that because he did not want his men to kill her near Yahweh's temple. 16 The guards formed two lines so that she could walk safely between them back to the palace. She walked through the entrance that horses used to get into the palace courtyard. The guards killed her there.

17 Then Jehoiada had King Joash and the people make a solemn agreement with Yahweh that they would always be loyal to him as their God. He also had the people make a solemn agreement with Joash that they would be loyal to him as their king. 18 Then the large crowd of Israelites who had gathered went to the temple of Baal. They destroyed the main altar and smashed the statues of Baal into pieces. They also killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, right in front of the other altars in the temple. Jehoiada then stationed guards at the temple of Yahweh. 19 Then Jehoiada, the officers who commanded the guards, the royal bodyguards, and the palace guards brought the king from the temple to the palace. All the people who had gathered there followed them. Joash entered the palace at the gate where the palace guards usually stood. He sat down on the same throne where the previous kings of Judah had sat. 20 The Judeans were glad that the guards had killed Athaliah at the palace. The city of Jerusalem became peaceful after she died.

21 Joash was seven years old when he became the king of Judah.

12 When Jehu had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, Joash became the king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for 40 years. His mother was Zibiah. She was from the city of Beersheba. 2 Jehoiada the priest instructed him. As a result, throughout his life, Joash did things that pleased Yahweh. 3 However, Joash did not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills. The Judeans continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places *instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem*.

4 Joash told the priests, "People give money to Yahweh's temple for several reasons. The law requires them to give some money to support the temple. Sometimes people dedicate people or animals to Yahweh and redeem them with money. And sometimes people just want to give money to the temple. 5 Each priest must take the money from the people who come to him, and he must use that money to pay for the repair of any damages that he discovers in the temple." 6 But after Joash had been ruling for almost 23 years, the priests still had not made repairs in the temple. 7 So Joash summoned Jehoiada and the other priests and told them, "I told you that when people gave money for various reasons, you should use it to make repairs to the temple. But you have not been doing that. So do not collect that money any longer. Instead, use it to pay workers to make the repairs." 8 The priests agreed that they would no longer collect that money or do the repair work.

9 Then Jehoiada took a chest and made a hole in its top. He put the box on the right side of the altar *in the temple courtyard*. Often people *gave some money for the temple* when they came to the temple courtyard. *When they did,* the priests

who supervised the courtyard entrance put that money in the box. 10 Whenever the priests realized that there was a lot of money in the chest, they would ask the king's secretary and the high priest to come and collect it. The secretary and priest took the money out of the chest and tied it up in bags. Then they weighed the bags to determine the value of this silver that people had given to the temple. 11 Then they would distribute the money to the men who supervised the work in the temple. The supervisors would use that money to pay the carpenters and builders who did the repair work in the temple. 12 They also used the money to pay masons and stone cutters and to buy timber and stones that workers had shaped. They used the timer and stone to repair damages in the temple. They also used the money to pay for all the other expenses of the repair work. 13 But they did not use any of that money to pay for silver cups or wick trimmers or bowls or trumpets or any other silver or gold items that the priests would use in the temple. 14 Instead, the supervisors gave all of that money to the men who were doing the work of repairing the temple. 15 The men who supervised the work acted honestly. So when the king's secretary and the high priest gave them money to pay the workers, they never required them to report how they had spent that money. 16 Sometimes people gave money to the priests who offered the animals that they brought as sacrifices for guilt or sin. That money belonged to the priests, so the supervisors did not use it to repair the temple.

17 Later, Hazael king of Aram led his army to attack the city of Gath. They conquered it. Then he decided to lead his army to attack Jerusalem. 18 So King Joash of Judah got all of the gold and silver items that the previous kings, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, had dedicated to Yahweh. He also got the gold and silver items that he had dedicated. He also got all of the gold that was in the storerooms of the temple and his palace. He sent this treasure to King Hazael *to persuade him to stop attacking Jerusalem*. So King Hazael led his army away from Jerusalem.

19 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Joash did. 20 Joash's officials plotted against him, and two of them ambushed him in Beth Millo, on the road that goes down to the district of Silla. 21 The two officials who ambushed Joash were Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer. They killed him. The Judeans buried Joash in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where people had also buried his ancestors. Then Joash's son Amaziah became the next king of Judah.

13 After Joash had been ruling Judah for almost 23 years, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for 17 years. 2 Jehoahaz did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned *by making calf idols*, and he made the people of Israel sin *by worshiping those idols*. Jehoahaz sinned in that same way, and he did not repent. 3 Yahweh became very angry with the Israelite people. So he allowed the armies of King Hazael of Aram and his son Ben Hadad to defeat the Israelites many times. 4 The Arameans were treating the Israelites very badly. So Jehoahaz prayed to Yahweh for help. Yahweh saw how badly the Arameans were treating the Israelites, so he did give Jehoahaz the help he asked for. 5 Yahweh sent a leader to Israel who rescued them from the control of the Aramean king. After that, the Israelites lived peacefully as they had done previously. 6 But even after that, the Israelites continued to commit the same kind of sins that Jeroboam and his descendants committed. Jeroboam had led the people of Israel to sin *by worshiping idols*, and they continued to sin in that way. Also, the pole that people used in the worship of the goddess Asherah remained in Samaria. 7 The Aramean army killed so many of Jehoahaz's soldiers that he had only 50 men left who rode on horses. He had only 10 chariots and 10,000 other soldiers left. The Arameans were so powerful compared to the Israelites that it was as if they could knock them down and walk over them. 8 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehoahaz did, including the battles that he fought. 9 Jehoahaz died, and the Israelites buried him in Samaria. Then his son Joash became the next king.

10 Jehoash son of Jehoahaz started to rule in Israel after King Joash had been ruling in Judah for 37 years. Jehoash ruled in Samaria for 16 years. 11 He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned *by making calf idols*, and he made the people of Israel sin *by worshiping those idols*. Jehoash sinned in that same way, and he did not repent. 12 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Joash did, including the victory that his army won against the army of King Amaziah of Judah. 13 When Joash died, the Israelites buried him in Samaria. That was where they had buried other kings of Israel. His son Jeroboam became the next king.

14 Then Elisha became very ill. Just before he died, King Joash went to Elisha and cried because he was so sad that he was going to die. He cried out, "Sir, you protected Israel so well*, but now you are going to die*!" 15 Elisha told him, "Bring me a bow and some arrows." So the king did that. 16 Then Elisha told the king to hold the bow in his left hand *and the bowstring in his right hand*. So the king did that. Elisha then put his own hands on top of the king's hands. 17 Then Elisha told him, "Have someone open that window through which we can look to the east." So a servant opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot an arrow *toward the east*!" So the king did that. Then Elisha told him, "That arrow represents how Yahweh will enable you to defeat the Aramean army. Your army will completely defeat them at the city of Aphek." 18 Then Elisha told him, "Pick up the other arrows." So he picked up the arrows. Then Elisha told the king, "Hit the ground with them!" So he hit the ground with them. But he only did that three times. 19 This made Elisha angry with him. He exclaimed, "You should have struck the ground five or six times! If you had done that, your army would have completely destroyed the Aramean army *in a series of battles*. Instead, your army is only going to win three battles against them."

20 Then Elisha died, and the Israelites buried him. At that time groups of raiders from Moab were coming into Israel each year during the spring. 21 Around that time, while some Israelites were carrying a man's body to where they wanted to bury him, they saw a group of those raiders. They *were afraid, so they* quickly threw that man's body into the same tomb where Elisha's body was *and ran away*. But as soon as the man's body touched Elisha's body, the dead man became alive again and stood up!

22 King Hazael of Aram had treated the Israelite people badly throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. 23 But Yahweh felt sorry for the Israelite people, so he treated them better than they deserved. He helped them because of the solemn

agreement he had made with *their ancestors* Abraham, Isaac,
and Jacob. He wanted them to continue being a nation. So
he still did not allow enemies to take the Israelites away
from their land. 24 When Hazael died, his son Ben Hadad
became the next king of Aram. 25 Ben Hadad son of Hazael
had fought and defeated Jehoash's father Jehoahaz. He had
captured several cities. But Joash defeated Ben Hadad three
times. In that way, he recaptured those cities and made them
part of Israel again.

14 After Jehoash son of Jehoahaz had been ruling Israel
for almost two years, Amaziah son of Joash became
the king of Judah. 2 He was 24 years old when he started to
rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for 29 years. His mother was
Jehoaddin. She was from the city of Jerusalem. 3 Amaziah
did many things that pleased Yahweh, but not to the extent
that King David, his ancestor, had done. He did the same kind
of good things that his father Joash had done. 4 However,
Amaziah did not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills. The
Judeans continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at
those places *instead of at the place that God had chosen for them
in Jerusalem*. 5 As soon as Amaziah was completely in control
of his kingdom, he had his soldiers execute the officials who
had murdered his father, King Joash. 6 But he did not tell his
servants to execute those officials' children. He obeyed what
Moses wrote in the book of laws that Yahweh gave him.
He wrote, "You must not execute parents for crimes that
their children commit, and you must not execute children
for crimes that their parents commit. You must only execute
people for the sins that they themselves commit." 7 Amaziah
led his army and defeated the Edomite army in the Valley of
Salt. The Judeans killed 10,000 Edomites. They captured the
city of Sela. Amaziah gave that city a new name, Joktheel,
and that is still its name.

8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to King Jehoash of Israel
to tell him, "I challenge you to a battle!" 9 But in reply, King
Jehoash had his messengers tell King Amaziah a story that
taught a lesson. They said, "Once a little thornbush was
growing in the mountains in Lebanon. It sent a message to a
great cedar tree. It told the cedar that it should allow the son
of the thornbush to marry its daughter. But as a wild animal
in Lebanon was walking along, it stepped on the thornbush
and crushed it." 10 *The messengers continued to say on behalf of
Jehoash,* "The meaning of my story is that you have become
very proud because your army defeated the army of Edom.
But you should be happy about that and not fight a further
war with me. If you cause trouble by fighting against me,
you will surely cause great harm to happen to you and to
your people."

11 But Amaziah did not withdraw his challenge. So Jehoash
led his army to fight against the army of Amaziah. They fought
a battle at the city of Beth Shemesh in Judah. 12 The Israelite
army defeated the army of Judah, and the Judean soldiers
ran away and went home. 13 Jehoash's army captured King
Amaziah at Beth Shemesh. Then they marched to Jerusalem
and tore down the wall around the city from the Ephraim
Gate to the Corner Gate. That section of the wall was about
180 meters long. 14 Jehoash's soldiers seized all the gold and
silver and valuable items that were in Yahweh's temple and
that Amaziah was keeping in the royal palace. They also
took some prisoners to make sure that Amaziah would not
attack Israel. Then Jehoash returned to Samaria.

15 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what
happened during their reigns describes further things that
Jehoash did, including more about how he and his army
fought and defeated the army of King Amaziah of Judah.
16 When Jehoash died, the Israelites buried him in Samaria.
That was where they had buried other kings of Israel. His
son Jeroboam became the next king.

17 King Amaziah of Judah lived for 15 more years after
King Jehoash of Israel died. 18 The book in which the kings of
Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes
further things that Amaziah did. 19 Some people in Jerusalem
plotted against Amaziah, so he ran away to the city of Lachish.
But those people sent men to follow him to Lachish, and
those men killed him there. 20 *To honor him,* his officials
brought his body back to Jerusalem in his own chariot.
They buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called
the City of David. That was where people had also buried
his ancestors. 21 Then the Judeans appointed Amaziah's son
Azariah as the next king. He became king when he was 16
years old. 22 After his father Amaziah died, Azariah led his
army to recapture the city of Elath. He then fortified that
city.

23 When Amaziah son of Joash had been ruling Judah
for almost 15 years, Jeroboam son of Jehoash became the
king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for 41 years.
24 He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites
were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned *by making calf
idols*, and he made the people of Israel sin *by worshiping those
idols*. This Jeroboam *sinned in that same way, and he* did not
repent. 25 Jeroboam led his soldiers to reconquer much of
the territory that the Israelites had previously controlled,
from Lebo Hamath *in the north* to the Sea of the Arabah
in the south. That is exactly what Yahweh, the God whom
the Israelites worship, promised would happen. He said that
in a message he gave to the prophet Jonah son of Amittai,
who came from the city of Gath Hepher. 26 Yahweh made
that promise and kept it because he saw that the Israelites'
enemies were causing them to suffer greatly. He also saw
that no one at all was able to rescue them. 27 But Yahweh
had not said that he would destroy the Israelites completely.
So he enabled King Jeroboam to rescue them.

28 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what
happened during their reigns describes further things that
Jeroboam did. He was a strong king. He led his armies
to recapture the territories in the areas of Damascus and
Hamath that Judean kings had formerly controlled. He made
them part of his kingdom of Israel. 29 When Jeroboam died,
*the Israelites buried him in Samaria. That was where they had
buried* other kings of Israel. His son Zechariah became the
next king.

15 After Jeroboam had been ruling Israel for almost
27 years, Azariah, the son of King Amaziah, began
to rule Judah. 2 He was 16 years old when he started to
rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for 52 years. His mother
was Jecoliah. She was from the city of Jerusalem. 3 He did
things that pleased Yahweh. He did the same good things
that his father Amaziah had done. 4 However, Azariah did
not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills. The Judeans
continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places
instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem.
5 *Azariah committed a serious sin,* and Yahweh punished him
by causing him to become a leper. Azariah remained a leper
for the rest of his life. He had to live in a house away from
other people. His son Jotham was in charge of the royal
palace and decided cases that Judeans brought to him. 6 The

book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Azariah did. 7 When Azariah died, the Judeans buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where people had also buried his ancestors. Ahaziah's son Jotham became the next king.

8 After Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost 38 years, Zechariah son of Jeroboam became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for six months. 9 He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. That is what his ancestors who were kings of Israel had done. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned *by making calf idols*, and he made the people of Israel sin *by worshiping those idols*. Zechariah *sinned in that same way, and he* did not repent. 10 Then Shallum son of Jabesh plotted against Zechariah. He assassinated him right in public. Then he became the next king. 11 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Zechariah did. 12 Yahweh had told Jehu that his son, grandson, great-grandson, and great-great-grandson would all be kings of Israel. And that is exactly what happened.

13 After Amaziah had been ruling Judah for almost 39 years, Shallum son of Jabesh became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for one month. 14 Then Menahem son of Gadi came from the city of Tirzah to Samaria and assassinated Shallum. Then Menahem became the next king. 15 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Shallum did, including how he plotted against King Zechariah. 16 After he became king, Menahem led his soldiers from Tirzah to the city of Tiphsah. They destroyed the city and killed the people who lived in it and near it. His soldiers even used their swords to split open the bellies of the pregnant women in the city *and kill the children in their wombs*. They did that because *those people had not wanted Menahem to be their king, so they* had not allowed him to come into their city. 17 When Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost 39 years, Menahem son of Gadi became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for ten years. 18 Menahem did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned *by making calf idols*, and he made the people of Israel sin *by worshiping those idols*. Menahem *sinned in that same way, and he* did not ever repent. 19 Then King Pul of Assyria led his army to invade Israel. Menahem gave him about 33 metric tons of silver so that he would be his ally and help him rule Israel more powerfully. 20 Menahem obtained that money from the rich men in Israel. He compelled each of them to contribute three fifths of a kilogram of silver. When Pul received that money, he ended his invasion and returned to Assyria. 21 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Menahem did. 22 After Menahem died, his son Pekahiah became the next king of Israel.

23 When Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost 50 years, Pekahiah son of Menahem became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for two years. 24 Pekahiah did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned *by making calf idols*, and he made the people of Israel sin *by worshiping those idols*. Pekahiah *sinned in that same way, and he* did not repent. 25 One of Pekahiah's military officers, Pekah son of Remaliah, plotted against him. Together with 50 men from the region of Gilead, he went to the fortress in the king's palace in Samaria. There they assassinated Pekahiah and two of his officials, Argob and Arieh. Then Pekah became the next king. 26 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Pekahiah did.

27 When Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost 52 years, Pekah son of Remaliah became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for 20 years. 28 Pekah did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. Jeroboam son of Nebat had sinned *by making calf idols*, and he made the people of Israel sin *by worshiping those idols*. Pekah *sinned in that same way, and he* did not repent.

29 While Pekah was the king of Israel, King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria led his army to invade the country. They captured the cities of Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. Those cities were in the parts of the regions of Gilead and Galilee that belonged to the tribe of Naphtali. Tiglath Pileser forced the Israelite people who had lived in those places to go to live in Assyria. 30 Then Hoshea son of Elah, plotted against Pekah. He assassinated him when Jotham son of Uzziah had been ruling Judah for almost 20 years. Then Hoshea became the next king of Israel. 31 The book in which the kings of Israel recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Pekah did.

32 When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost two years, Jotham son of Azariah began to rule Judah. 33 Jotham was 25 years old when he started to rule, and he ruled from Jerusalem for 16 years. His mother was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. 34 He did many things that pleased Yahweh, just as his father Uzziah had done. 35 However, Jotham did not destroy the shrines on the tops of hills. The Judeans continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places *instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem*. Jotham had his workers build the upper gate of the temple courtyard. 36 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jotham did. 37 During the reign of Jotham, Yahweh prompted King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel to start planning to attack Judah. 38 When Jotham died, the Judeans buried him in the part of Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where people had buried his ancestors. Jotham's son Ahaz became the next king.

16 When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost 17 years, Ahaz son of Jotham became the king of Judah. 2 Ahaz was 20 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for 16 years. He did not do things that pleased Yahweh, the God he should have worshiped, the way his ancestor King David had done. 3 Instead, he behaved in the same sinful way that the kings of Israel behaved. He even burned up his son as an offering to an idol. That was one of the disgusting things that the people groups who had previously lived in the land of Canaan had done. Yahweh drove those people out so that the Israelites could settle in the land. 4 He offered sacrifices and burned incense on hilltop shrines, on the tops of many other hills, and under many big trees.

5 Then King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel led their armies to attack Jerusalem. Those armies surrounded the city, but they could not defeat the army of Ahaz and conquer it. 6 (When King Rezin of Aram led his army to invade Judah, he forced the Judeans who were occupying and defending the city of Elath to leave. He made that city part of his own kingdom. Arameans went to live in Elath, and they have continued to live there.)

7 King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath Pileser of
Assyria to tell him, “I promise that I will become your subject
king if you come and rescue me from the armies of Aram
and Israel that are attacking me.” 8 Ahaz took the silver and
gold that was in Yahweh’s temple and that he was keeping in
the royal palace and sent it as tribute to the king of Assyria.
9 Tiglath Pileser agreed to do what Ahaz asked. He led his
army to attack Damascus, and they captured the city. He
executed Rezin. Then his army forced the people who lived
in Damascus to leave and go to live in the city of Kir.
10 Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath
Pileser. He saw the altar that was there. He sent Uriah, the
high priest in Jerusalem, a drawing of the altar and a detailed
description of how to build one like it. 11 So Uriah followed
the directions that King Ahaz had sent him, and he built an
altar *in Jerusalem* like the one in Damascus. Uriah worked
hard to finish the altar before Ahaz returned from Damascus.
12 When King Ahaz returned from Damascus, he inspected
the altar *and approved of how Uriah had built it*. Then he
brought sacrifices and offered them on the altar. 13 He burned
a sacrificial animal and a grain offering on it. He also poured
a wine offering onto it. He also scattered on it the blood
from his fellowship sacrifices. 14 There was a bronze altar *in
the temple courtyard* where the Israelites considered Yahweh
to be especially present. *Uriah had positioned the new altar
so that the bronze altar* was between the new altar and the
temple. Ahaz had Uriah move the bronze altar away from
the temple and put it on the right side of his new altar.
15 Then King Ahaz ordered Uriah, “I want you to use this
new altar for the sacrifices that the priests burn completely
each morning and for the grain offering that they offer each
evening. I also want you to use it for the burnt offerings
and grain offerings that I bring. I also want you to use it for
the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and wine offerings that
the people bring. When the priests offer animals as burnt
sacrifices or fellowship sacrifices, scatter the blood of those
animals against the sides of the altar. The old bronze altar
will be only for me to use when I pray.” 16 So Uriah did what
the king commanded him to do.
17 King Ahaz told his workers to take off the panels of the
bronze carts that were outside the temple. He also told them
to take off the water basins that were on them. He also had
them take the giant water basin that people called a sea off
the backs of the bronze statues of oxen that it rested on. He
had them put it on stones they spread on the ground *so the
basin would not sink into the earth*. 18 Earlier one of the kings
had had his workers build a covered walkway that people
could use to get to the temple courtyard on the Sabbath day.
Another king had made a private entrance into the temple
courtyard for the kings of Judah. Ahaz had his workers take
down that walkway and close up that entrance. Ahaz did
all these things in order to please the king of Assyria. 19 The
book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened
during their reigns describes further things that Ahaz did.
20 When Ahaz died, the Judeans buried him in the part of
Jerusalem that people called the City of David. That is where
people had buried his ancestors. Ahaz’s son Hezekiah became
the next king.

17 Hoshea son of Elah began to rule Israel after Ahaz
had ruled Judah for 12 years. Hoshea ruled in
Samaria for 9 years. 2 He did many things that Yahweh had
told the Israelites were evil. However, he did not do as
many evil things as the previous kings of Israel had done.
3 King Shalmaneser of Assyria led his army to attack and
defeat the army of King Hoshea. Hoshea became a vassal of
Shalmaneser, who forced the Israelites to pay him tribute
each year. 4 Then Hoshea secretly plotted to rebel against the
king of Assyria. He sent messengers to King So of Egypt*, asking
if his army would help the Israelites become free from Assyrian
control*. Hoshea also stopped paying tribute to Assyria each
year. But the king of Assyria discovered what Hoshea was
doing, so *he invaded and conquered Israel and* put Hoshea
in prison. 5 King Shalmaneser led his army to invade Israel.
They conquered the other important cities and towns in the
kingdom, and then they besieged the city of Samaria. The
Israelites were able to resist for three years, 6 but finally the
army of Assyria defeated them and conquered the city. This
happened after King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for nine
years. The Assyrians took the Israelites as captives to Assyria.
They made them live in the city of Halah, near the Habor
River in the region of Gozan, and in cities in the kingdom of
Media*, which the Assyrians had conquered*.
7 This happened because the Israelite people sinned against
Yahweh their God. Even though he had rescued their ancestors
from Egypt, where they were slaves to Pharaoh, they began
to worship other gods. 8 They imitated the things that the
people groups around them did. Those were the people
groups that Yahweh had forced to leave the land so that the
Israelites could settle there. The people of Israel also did the
same evil things that most of their kings did. 9 The Israelite
people pretended they were worshiping Yahweh their God
even as they did things he had forbidden. They built shrines
for idols on the hills around their cities. No matter how many
or few people lived in a place, they would build a shrine for
it. 10 They set up stone pillars to honor false gods and poles
to worship the goddess Asherah. They set them up on the
tops of many hills and under many big trees. 11 The Israelites
burned incense in the places where they worshiped those
false gods. That was what the people groups had done that
Yahweh forced to leave so that the Israelites could live in
the land. The Israelites did many wicked things that made
Yahweh angry. 12 They worshiped idols, even though Yahweh
had specifically commanded them not to do that. 13 Yahweh
frequently sent his prophets and seers to warn the people of
Israel and the people of Judah. The message that Yahweh
spoke through them was, “Stop doing all the evil things you
have been doing! Instead, obey all the laws that I gave to your
ancestors and that my prophets are now telling you to obey.”
14 But the Israelite people did not do what the prophets told
them to do. They were stubborn, just as their ancestors had
been. Their ancestors had not truly believed in Yahweh their
God. 15 Yahweh had given them laws to obey. He had made
a covenant with their ancestors. Yahweh sent prophets to
warn them to stop disobeying him. But they disregarded all
those things. Instead, they worshiped worthless idols, and
as a result, they became worthless themselves. Yahweh had
commanded them not to do the things that the people groups
did that lived near them. But they disobeyed his command.
16 The Israelite people completely disobeyed the commands
that Yahweh had given them. They made two metal images of
calves and worshiped them. They set up poles to worship the
goddess Asherah, and they also worshiped the false god Baal.
They bowed down to the sun, the moon, and stars. 17 They
also burned their own sons and daughters as sacrifices to
false gods. They practiced sorcery and fortune telling. They
continually chose to do things that Yahweh had told them
were evil. That made Yahweh very angry. 18 And because

Yahweh was so angry with the Israelite people, he allowed their enemies to take them away from their country. Only the people of the tribe of Judah remained in the land.

19 But even the people of Judah did not obey the commands of Yahweh their God. Instead, they did the same evil things that the people of the northern kingdom of Israel were doing. 20 So Yahweh rejected the people of Israel and of Judah. He punished them by allowing others to make them suffer. Raiders came into their land and took away their valuable possessions. Finally, the armies of other nations defeated them and carried them away from their land as prisoners. 21 Earlier, Yahweh had led ten of the Israelite tribes to reject David's descendants as their kings. Instead, those tribes chose Jeroboam son of Nebat to be their king. But Jeroboam led the people of Israel to stop worshiping Yahweh *and to worship idols instead*. He led them to commit serious sins. 22 The Israelite people continued to do the sinful things that Jeroboam had done. They did not stop doing those sinful things. 23 So Yahweh finally allowed a foreign army to conquer the Israelites and remove them from their land. That was just what he had told his prophets to warn them would happen. The Assyrians took the Israelite people to their own land, and they are still there.

24 To replace the Israelites, the king of Assyria ordered his soldiers to bring in groups of people from the cities of Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. What had been the northern kingdom of Israel was now their land, and those people settled in its cities. 25 But when those people first arrived in Israel, they did not worship Yahweh. So Yahweh allowed lions to attack them, and the lions killed some of them. 26 Some officials of the king of Assyria *found out about this* and told him, "The people who have settled in the cities of Samaria do not know how to worship the God whom people should worship if they live in that land. So that God is allowing lions to attack them and kill them because they are not worshiping him properly."

27 So the king of Assyria commanded his officers, "Get one of the priests whom you brought here from that place. Tell him to move back there and teach the people who are now living there how to worship the God of that land properly." 28 So the officers sent back one of the Israelite priests. That priest went to live in the city of Bethel. From there he taught the people who had settled in the land how to worship Yahweh properly. 29 But the people of each of those nations also made idols to represent their own gods. They put them in the shrines that the Israelites had built on the tops of hills. Each group of people put idols representing their gods in the shrines near the cities where they lived. 30 The people from Babylon made idols to represent their god Succoth Benoth. The people from Cuthah made idols to represent their god Nergal. The people from Hamath made idols to represent their god Ashima. 31 The people from Avva made idols to represent their gods Nibhaz and Tartak. The people from Sepharvaim sacrificed their own children by burning them up on altars as offerings to their gods Adrammelech and Anammelech 32 Those people worshiped Yahweh, but they also appointed men from their own groups to be priests at the hilltop shrines. Those priests offered sacrifices in the shrines to foreign gods. 33 So they worshiped Yahweh, but they also worshiped their own gods, just as the people living in their home countries did.

34 The people who live in that area still act the way the first settlers did. Yahweh gave Jacob the new name Israel, and he gave his descendants laws to obey. But those people do not obey those laws. So they do not really worship Yahweh. 35 Yahweh had made a covenant with the Israelites. He had commanded them, "Do not revere other gods or bow down to them *to honor them*. Do not worship them or offer sacrifices to them. 36 I, Yahweh, rescued you from slavery in Egypt by my very great power. So I am the only God you are to revere. I am the one to whom you must bow down *to honor*. I am the one to whom you must offer sacrifices. 37 You must always carefully obey all of the laws that I told Moses to write down for you. You must not revere other gods. 38 You must never forget the covenant that I made with you. You must not revere other gods. 39 I, Yahweh, am the only God you are to revere. If you do that, I will prevent any enemy from conquering you." 40 But the people who live in what was the kingdom of Israel *do* not carefully *obey Yahweh's law*. Instead, they still act the way the first settlers did. 41 Each generation of these people has acted in the same way. They worship Yahweh, but they also worship idols that represent their gods. That was what their ancestors did, and that is what they still do.

18 After Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost three years, Hezekiah son of Ahaz began to rule Judah. 2 Hezekiah was 25 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for 29 years. His mother was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. 3 Hezekiah did things that pleased Yahweh, just as his ancestor King David had done. 4 He had his servants destroy the shrines that were on the tops of hills. He also had them smash the stone pillars that represented Baal. He had them cut down *and burn* the poles that people had set up for worshiping the goddess Asherah. He also broke into pieces the bronze replica of a snake that Moses had made. Hezekiah did that because at that time, the people were burning incense in front of it to honor it. (They had named it Nehushtan.) 5 Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped. No king who ruled Judah before him or after him was as devoted to Yahweh as he was. 6 Hezekiah remained loyal to Yahweh and did not disobey him. He carefully obeyed the commandments that Yahweh had given to Moses. 7 Yahweh helped Hezekiah. As a result, he won victories wherever he led his troops to fight their enemies. Hezekiah refused to be a subject of the king of Assyria and obey him. 8 Hezekiah led his army against the Philistines, and they defeated them in battles throughout their territory as far south as the city of Gaza and the area around it.

9 After Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years and Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, the army of King Shalmaneser of Assyria invaded Israel and surrounded the city of Samaria. 10 After three years, they captured the city. That was when Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost six years and Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost nine years. 11 The king of Assyria commanded his soldiers to take the Israelites as captives to Assyria. They made them live in the city of Halah, near the Habor River in the region of Gozan, and in cities in the kingdom of Media*, which the Assyrians had conquered*. 12 That happened because the Israelites did not obey the commandments that Yahweh their God had given them. They disobeyed the solemn agreement that Yahweh had made with their ancestors. That agreement included the laws that Moses had told them to obey. They were not careful to obey those laws.

13 After Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost 14 years, King Sennacherib of Assyria led his army to attack

all of the cities in Judah that had walls around them. They started capturing these cities one by one. 14 King Hezekiah sent a message to Sennacherib at the city of Lachish, which he and his army were trying to capture. He told him, “What I did was wrong. Please tell your soldiers to stop attacking us. If you do that, I will pay you whatever you tell me to pay.” The king of Assyria told Hezekiah that he had to pay him 10, 000 kilograms of silver and 1, 000 kilograms of gold. 15 So Hezekiah sent him all the silver that was in Yahweh’s temple and that he was keeping in the royal palace. 16 *To get the gold he needed,* Hezekiah had his workers strip off the gold that he had earlier put on the doors and doorposts of the temple. He sent all that gold to the king of Assyria. 17 But the king of Assyria sent *three of his most important officials,* the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh, with a large army from the city of Lachish to persuade King Hezekiah to surrender. When the army reached Jerusalem, they stopped alongside the aqueduct through which water flowed from the Upper Pool into Jerusalem. They stopped at the place where it went under the road that led to the Field of the Fuller. 18 Those officials sent a message to King Hezekiah *saying that they had a message for him from the king of Assyria*. Hezekiah sent three of his officials to speak with them. He sent Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace. He also sent Shebna, his official secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the official who reported to the people everything that Hezekiah decided they should do.

19 The Rabshakeh told them to tell Hezekiah, “The great king, the king of Assyria, says that you have no reason to expect that anyone will help you fight against him. 20 You claim that you have a strong enough army and good enough plans to resist him. But that is only talk. *You can not resist him alone, and* you can not depend on anyone else to help you. So you should not have rebelled against him. 21 You are relying on the army of Egypt to help you. But you must realize that that is like using a broken reed as a staff for support. The pointed end of such a staff would make a hole in the hand of anyone who tried to use it! That is what the king of Egypt is like. He hurts anyone who relies on him for help.” 22 *The Rabshakeh then said to Hezekiah’s officials,* “Perhaps you will tell me that you are relying on Yahweh your God to help you. But he *will not help you, because* Hezekiah has insulted him by destroying his hilltop shrines and the altars on which the Judeans were offering sacrifices to him. Hezekiah has required everyone who lives in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judah to worship only at the altar in Jerusalem. 23 *So tell Hezekiah for me that* I am offering him a deal on behalf of my master, the king of Assyria. I will give him 2,000 horses if he still has enough healthy soldiers to ride on them! 24 But also tell him that I know that even if I gave him those horses, he would not be able to defeat even one of the weakest soldiers in our army. Tell him I know that is why he is hoping that the king of Egypt will send chariots and soldiers on horseback to help him. 25 Furthermore, do not think that we have come to destroy Jerusalem without Yahweh’s help. It is Yahweh himself who told us to come here and destroy this land!”

26 Then Eliakim told the Rabshakeh on behalf of himself and Shebna and Joah, “Sir, please speak to us in your own Aramaic language. We understand it. Do not keep speaking to us in our Judean language. The people who are standing on the wall can *hear and* understand you*, and you are frightening them*.” 27 But the Rabshakeh told Eliakim, “You should not think that my master sent me to say these things only to your king and to you and not also to the people on the wall who are listening! *If you do not surrender, we will besiege the city, and soon* they will have nothing to eat but their own dung and nothing to drink but their own urine. The three of you will also have nothing else to eat or drink.” 28 Then the Rabshakeh directly faced the people on the wall. He shouted to them in Judean, “Listen to this message from the great king, the king of Assyria. 29 He says that you must not allow Hezekiah to deceive you. Hezekiah will not be able to rescue you from his army. 30 He says that you must not allow Hezekiah to persuade you to rely on Yahweh by telling you that Yahweh will certainly rescue you and that the army of Assyria will never capture this city! 31 Do not let Hezekiah persuade you! The king of Assyria says that you should come out of the city and surrender to him. He says that if you do that, *instead of being very hungry as you are now,* you will be able to eat the grapes and figs you have grown and drink water from your own wells. 32 He promises that you will be able to do that until his soldiers come and take you to a land that is like your land. It will be a land where you can grow grain to make bread and grow grapes to make wine. It will be a land that has groves of olive trees that produce oil and whose bees produce honey. The king encourages you to survive *by surrendering* rather than die *by continuing to resist*. He says that Hezekiah is deceiving you when he says that Yahweh will rescue you and so you must not believe him. 33 The king reminds you that none of the gods that the people of other nations worship have been able to prevent him from conquering those nations! 34 The gods of Hamath and Arpad did not come and rescue the people who lived there! The gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah did not come and rescue the people who lived there! And even the gods of Samaria did not prevent me from conquering it! 35 The king reminds you that none of these gods prevented him from conquering the people who worshiped them. So do not think that Yahweh will prevent him from conquering Jerusalem.”

36 King Hezekiah had told the people, “When the Rabshakeh speaks to you, do not answer him.” So the people who were listening did not say anything in reply to him. 37 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah tore their clothes *because they were extremely distressed*. They went back to Hezekiah and told him what the Rabshakeh had said.

19 When King Hezekiah heard what the Rabshakeh had said, *to show how distressed he was,* he tore his regular clothes and wore rough cloth instead. Then he went into *the courtyard of* Yahweh’s temple *to pray*. 2 Then Hezekiah sent Eliakim, Shebna, and some of the older priests to go and speak with the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. All those men were also wearing rough cloth *to show their distress*. 3 The men told Isaiah, “King Hezekiah says that we are now in great trouble. Yahweh seems to be punishing us for our sins. Foreigners are insulting us *because we do not seem to have a God who can help us*. Our lives are in danger, like the lives of the mother and child when it is time for a woman to give birth but she does not have the strength to push her baby out. 4 The Rabshakeh insulted the only true God. That was what his master, the king of Assyria, sent him to do. Perhaps Yahweh your God heard everything that he said. Perhaps he will punish him for saying those things. King Hezekiah asks you to pray for those of us who are still alive here in Jerusalem.” 5 After the messengers from Hezekiah told Isaiah these things, 6 Isaiah told them to go back to the king and tell him that Yahweh said to him, “Those soldiers of the king

of Assyria insulted me *by saying that I was no better than the false gods that other nations worship*. But you should not let what they said make you afraid. 7 I am going to send a spirit to Sennacherib *that will make him anxious*. Then he will hear a rumor that will worry him so much that he will return to his own country. There some men will assassinate him." 8 To report what had happened in Jerusalem, the Rabshakeh went to Libnah. He went there because he learned that the Assyrian army had left Lachish. The king of Assyria was then leading an attack against Libnah. 9 Soon after that, King Sennacherib received a report that King Tirhakah of Cush was leading his army to attack them. *So he did not attack Jerusalem right away, but instead* he sent more messengers to King Hezekiah. 10 The king told his messengers to tell Hezekiah, "Yahweh your God is promising you that my army will never capture Jerusalem. You trust Yahweh, but he is not telling the truth, so do not believe him. 11 You have certainly heard what the armies of the kings of Assyria have done to all the other lands they invaded. They have completely destroyed them. So do not think that you will escape! 12 The gods of other nations did not rescue them. Instead, the armies of previous kings of Assyria destroyed them. That is what happened to the people of Gozan, Haran, and Rezeph and the Edenites who lived in Tel Assar. 13 The Assyrians defeated and killed the kings of Hamath and Arpad and the cities of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah."

14 The messengers gave Hezekiah a letter from the Assyrian king that said the same thing they had told him. Hezekiah read the letter. Then he went to the temple. The Assyrian king had written the letter on a scroll, and Hezekiah unrolled the scroll so that the writing would be visible as he prayed to Yahweh. 15 Then Hezekiah prayed, "Yahweh, you are the God to whom we Israelites belong. You are present in a special way above the statues of the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest in your temple. You are the only true God. You rule all the kingdoms on this earth. You are the one who created everything on the earth and in the heavens. 16 So, Yahweh, please pay attention to me as I speak, and look at what the king of Assyria has written. Listen *as I read it aloud* to what King Sennacherib has said to insult you, the only true God. 17 Yahweh, it is true that the armies of the kings of Assyria have completely destroyed many people groups and the lands in which they were living. 18 It is also true that they have burned up the idols of those nations. But those were not really gods. They were only wooden or stone statues. Humans made them, and that is why the Assyrians were able to destroy them so easily. 19 So now, Yahweh our God, please prevent the king of Assyria from conquering us. That way the people in all the kingdoms of the world will know that you, Yahweh, are the only true God."

20 Then Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah. He told him, "Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, says that he will do what you asked him to do when you prayed to him about Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. 21 Yahweh says that the people of Jerusalem will belittle him and make fun of him. They will shake their heads to ridicule him as he runs away from the city with his army. 22 Yahweh says that the Assyrian king should not have insulted and made fun of him, the holy God whom the Israelites worship. He should not have shouted at him or proudly looked up at the sky. 23 Yahweh says that the Assyrian king sent messengers to make fun of him. Through those messengers, *boasting about his military conquests,* he said that it was as if he had led his many chariots to the highest and most distant mountains in Lebanon. He said it was as if he and his soldiers had cut down the tallest cedar trees and best cypress trees in Lebanon. *Boasting that he would now conquer Jerusalem,* he said that it was as if he and his army would now go to the place where people most want to go in Lebanon. That is a place where workers have made a beautiful park in the midst of the forest. 24 Yahweh says that the Assyrian king is boasting that *in order to march through desolate regions,* he and his soldiers have dug wells in other countries to get water. He is also boasting that he will conquer Matsor*, which people also call Egypt,* as easily as a person can stamp out a small puddle of water.

25 But Yahweh says that the Assyrian king should realize that he planned long ago for those things to happen. Now he is causing them to occur. That is why the king's army has been capturing and destroying many cities that were surrounded by high walls. 26 The people who lived in those cities were not able to resist the Assyrians. This discouraged them and shamed them. The Assyrians destroyed them as easily as someone can cut down green plants that are growing in a field. The Assyrians destroyed them just as the heat of the sun destroys grass on the roof of a house before it can grow. 27 But, Yahweh says, he knows where the king of Assyria lives. He knows when he leaves home and when he returns. He knows when the king yells at him angrily. 28 Yahweh says that he has heard the king yelling at him angrily. As a result, he is going to force him to return to his own country *without conquering Jerusalem* by the same route that he took to get here. It will be as if Yahweh puts a hook in his nose and a bit in his mouth in order to make him go where he wants him to go.

29 Here is a sign for you, Hezekiah*, to show that this message is truly from Yahweh*. This year, you and your people will eat wild grain. Next year, you will eat the grain that grows from the seeds of those wild plants. But the following year, you Israelites will be able to plant grain and harvest it. You will be able to plant vineyards and eat the grapes. 30 The people in Judah who remain alive will once again prosper and have many sons and daughters, like plants whose roots go deep down into the ground and that produce much fruit. 31 People will survive the Assyrian invasion. Afterwards, many of them will move from Jerusalem on Mount Zion to resettle other parts of Judah. Yahweh will eagerly make this happen. 32 Yahweh declares that the king of Assyria will not bring his army to this city. His soldiers will not shoot a single arrow at it. His soldiers will not appear outside of it carrying shields. They will not build a high mound of dirt against the city wall to try to get over it. 33 Yahweh says that the king of Assyria will not lead his army to this city. Instead, they will return to their own country by the same route that they took to get here. 34 Yahweh says that he will defend this city and prevent the Assyrians from destroying it. He will do that to show that he is the one true God and because of what he promised to his servant David*, that his descendants would always rule in Jerusalem*."

35 That night, an angel representing Yahweh went to the place where the Assyrian soldiers had set up their tents. He killed 185,000 of the soldiers. When the rest of the soldiers woke up the next morning, they saw the dead bodies of all those soldiers. 36 Then King Sennacherib had his soldiers take down their tents, and he led them away from Israel. They returned to Assyria, and Sennacherib remained in the city of Nineveh. 37 One day King Sennacherib was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch. *Two of his sons,* Adrammelech and

Sharezer, killed him with their swords. Then they escaped to the region of Ararat. Sennacherib's *other* son Esarhaddon became the next king of Assyria.

20 Around that time, Hezekiah became so sick that he was in danger of dying. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him and told him, "Yahweh says that you should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die. You should do that because you are not going to recover from this illness. Instead, you are going to die." 2 Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall *so that he could have privacy* and prayed to Yahweh. He said, 3 "Yahweh, please do not forget that I have served you loyally and I have devoted myself entirely to you. I have done things that pleased you." Then Hezekiah started to cry loudly. 4 Isaiah *left the king, but* before he had crossed the middle courtyard of the palace, Yahweh gave him a message. He said, 5 "Go back to Hezekiah, the king of Judah, and tell him that I, Yahweh, the God whom his ancestor King David worshiped, have heard what he prayed. I have seen how he has been crying. Tell him that I will heal him. Two days from now, he will be able to go to my temple. 6 Tell him that I will enable him to live for 15 more years. Promise him that I will prevent the king of Assyria from defeating him and conquering this city. I will defend this city to show that I am the one true God and because of what I promised to my servant David." 7 Isaiah *came back and told Hezekiah what Yahweh had said, then he* told Hezekiah's servants, "Make a paste from figs." The servants made the fig paste and put it on the sore place on Hezekiah's body. Then he recovered.

8 Hezekiah had asked Isaiah *when he told him that Yahweh would heal him*, "Will Yahweh please give me a sign to show that he is going to heal me and that two days from now I will be able to go to his temple?" 9 Isaiah had replied, "Yahweh will do something that will prove to you that he will do what he promised. The shadow has gone ten steps down the stairway *that serves as a sundial*. Do you want him to make it go back up those ten steps?" 10 Hezekiah replied, "It would be easy to move the shadow farther down the steps *because that is how it always moves*. So do not ask Yahweh to do that. Instead, ask him to make it go back up those ten steps." 11 So Isaiah prayed earnestly to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused the shadow to go ten steps back up the stairs that King Ahaz had his workers build *as a sundial*.

12 Berodach Baladan had become the king of Babylon after his father Baladan died. Around this time, he learned that King Hezekiah had been very sick. So he sent messengers to him. They brought a gift to Hezekiah, along with a letter *that said how glad Berodach Baladan was that Hezekiah had recovered*. 13 When the messengers arrived, Hezekiah listened when they read the letter to him from Berodach Baladan. Then he showed them all the valuable possessions he was keeping in his palace. He showed them the silver and the gold, the spices, the special olive oil, and the weapons for his soldiers. He showed them all the valuable things that were in his storerooms and in other places in his kingdom. 14 Then the prophet Isaiah went to Hezekiah and asked him, "Where did those men come from, and what did they say to you?" Hezekiah replied, "They came from a country that is far from here. They came from Babylon." 15 Isaiah asked, "What did they see in your palace?" Hezekiah replied, "I showed them everything in my palace. I showed them all the valuable things that are in my storerooms."

16 Then Isaiah told him, "Yahweh is telling you 17 that there will be a time when the Babylonian army will take away all the valuable things in your palace. That includes the things that your ancestors have put there over the years. They will leave nothing valuable here. This is what Yahweh is telling you. 18 He is also telling you that the Babylonian army will force some of your own descendants to go to Babylon. There they will be eunuchs in the royal palace." 19 Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, "I accept what Yahweh has said in the message you have delivered." He said that because he was thinking, "Even if that happens, the people of my kingdom will live peacefully and safely for as long as I am alive." 20 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Hezekiah did, including the victories that his armies won. That book also describes how he had his workers build a reservoir in the city and a tunnel to bring water into that reservoir. 21 When Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh became the next king of Judah.

21 Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to rule. He ruled Judah for 55 years in Jerusalem. His mother was Hephzibah. 2 He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. He imitated the disgusting practices of the nations that Yahweh had forced to leave the land of Canaan so that the Israelites could settle there. 3 His father Hezekiah had destroyed the shrines where the Judeans had worshiped on the tops of hills. But Manasseh commanded his workers to rebuild those shrines. He had his workers build altars for Baal. He also had them set up a pole for the worship of the goddess Asherah, as King Ahab of Israel had previously done. Manasseh also bowed down to the sun, moon, and stars to worship them. 4 He directed his workers to build altars *for worshiping foreign gods* and to put them inside Yahweh's temple, even though Yahweh had said, "Jerusalem will be the place where people worship me." 5 He also had his workers make altars for the sun, moon, and stars and put them in the courtyards for the priests and the people in the temple area. 6 He even burned his own son as a sacrifice to a false god. He performed rituals to practice sorcery. He allowed people to dig pits so they could use them try to contact people who had died. People also used those pits to try to talk to spirits that they thought could tell them things that people otherwise could not know. He did very many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, and that made Yahweh very angry. 7 He placed the pole for the worship of the goddess Asherah inside the temple building. That was the place about which Yahweh had said to David and his son Solomon, "I will make Jerusalem, and especially this temple, places where people will always worship me. I chose Jerusalem for that purpose from among all of the cities in the land of Israel. 8 And if the Israelite people carefully obey all my commands and all the laws that I gave to them through my servant Moses, I will not make them wander again. They will be able to stay in this land that I gave to their ancestors." 9 But the people did not carefully obey Yahweh. Manasseh persuaded them to commit sins that were even worse than the sins that the people of the nations committed whom Yahweh destroyed so that the Israelites could settle in the land of Canaan.

10 Yahweh sent prophets to warn Manasseh and the people of Judah. They said, 11 "*Yahweh is angry with* King Manasseh of Judah because he has done disgusting evil things. They are worse than the things the Amorites did who lived in

the land before the Israelites. Manasseh has also influenced the people of Judah to sin against Yahweh by worshiping the idols that he has made. 12 Therefore Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, says that he is going to make something terrible happen to Jerusalem and the rest of Judah. It will be so terrible that it will shock everyone who hears about it. 13 He says that he will judge and punish the people of Jerusalem by the same standards that he used to judge the people of Samaria and the descendants of Ahab. When people wipe a plate clean, they turn it over to make sure that they have left nothing on it. In the same way, Yahweh will destroy Jerusalem and make sure that there is nothing left of it. 14 Some of its people will survive, but he will not help them, even though he had chosen the Israelites as his special people. Instead, he will allow their enemies to conquer them and take them and all of their valuable possessions away from their land. 15 He will do this because his people have done things that he has told them are very evil. This has made him very angry. They have been making him angry ever since the time when their ancestors left Egypt."

16 Manasseh also had his soldiers kill very many innocent people throughout the city of Jerusalem. He did this in addition to committing sins that influenced the people of Judah to commit sins by doing things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil. 17 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Manasseh did, including the many sins that he committed. 18 When Manasseh died, the Judeans buried him in the garden outside his palace. A man whose name was Uzza had previously owned that land. Manasseh's son Amon became the next king of Judah.

19 Amon was 22 years old when he became king. He ruled Judah from Jerusalem for two years. His mother was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz. She was from the city of Jotbah. 20 He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as his father Manasseh had done. 21 He behaved just as his father had behaved. He worshiped the same idols that his father had worshiped. He bowed down to those idols to worship them. 22 He did not worship Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors had worshiped. He did not behave as Yahweh has said people should behave. 23 Amon's officials plotted against him. They assassinated him in his palace. 24 But then the people of Judah killed all those who had assassinated King Amon. They appointed his son Josiah to be their next king. 25 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Amon did. 26 The Judeans buried Amon in the tomb in the garden that Uzza had formerly owned. Amon's son Josiah became the next king.

22 Josiah was 8 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for 31 years. His mother was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah. She was from the city of Bozkath. 2 Josiah did things that pleased Yahweh. He behaved in the same godly manner as his ancestor King David had behaved. He did not behave differently at all.

3 After Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, he sent his secretary Shaphan, whose father was Azaliah and whose grandfather was Meshullam, to Yahweh's temple. He told him, 4 "The priests who supervise the courtyard entrance have collected money from the people and brought it into the temple. Go and tell the high priest Hilkiah to get that money, count it, and put it in bags. 5 Tell him to give the money to the men who are supervising the work of repairing the temple. They are to use it to pay the men who are doing the actual work of making the repairs that the temple needs. 6 They must use it to pay carpenters and builders and masons and to buy timber and stones that workers have shaped. The skilled workers will use that timber and stone to repair the temple." 7 The men who supervise the work are completely honest. So you do not need to require them to report how they spend the money you give them.

8 *So Shaphan did that, and later* Hilkiah reported to him, "I have found a scroll in the temple that records the laws that God gave to Moses." Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it. 9 Then Shaphan went to King Josiah and told him, "I gave the priests your instructions, and they have emptied the chest in which they were collecting money for the temple. They have given the money to the men who are supervising the work of repairing the temple." 10 Then Shaphan also told the king, "Hilkiah gave me this scroll." And Shaphan read to the king what the scroll recorded. 11 When the king heard the laws that Shaphan was reading to him from the scroll, he tore his robes *to show how concerned he was that Yahweh would punish the Judeans*. 12 Then King Josiah gave special instructions to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan his royal secretary, and Asaiah, his special advisor. He told them, 13 "Now that Hilkiah has found this scroll, I want you to go and ask Yahweh what I and the people of Jerusalem and the rest of Judah should do about what it says. Our ancestors did not obey the commandments that this scroll records. They should have done everything that Moses wrote we should do. So Yahweh must be very angry with us."

14 So Hilkiah, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to consult a woman whose name was Huldah. She was a prophetess, and she lived in the Second Quarter of Jerusalem. She was married to Shallum, whose father was Tikvah and whose grandfather was Harhas. Shallum took care of the garments that the priests wore in the temple. Those five men told Huldah about the scroll that Hilkiah had found. 15 In response, she told them, "Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says that wants you to say something to the man who sent you to me. 16 Yahweh says that he is going to make something terrible happen to this city and to the people who live here. He is going to punish them in the way that the scroll King Josiah read describes. 17 He is going to do that because they stopped worshiping him and burned incense to *honor* other gods. They made many idols, and that made him very angry. He is so angry with them that he is going punish them. 18 But there is something further that you are to tell the king of Judah, who sent you to ask Yahweh about what the scroll said. Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says that 19 he is going to treat him mercifully. Yahweh will do that because he was so sad and he acted humbly toward me when he heard what Yahweh said he was going to do to punish this city and the people who live here. Yahweh said that he was going to do something so terrible that it would horrify people. People would curse other places by saying they wanted them to become like Jerusalem. But when King Josiah heard that, he wept and tore his robes *to show his distress*. He knew that Yahweh was watching him. That is why Yahweh declares that he is going to treat him mercifully. 20 Yahweh wants you to tell Josiah that because he was sorry for the sins of Judah, Yahweh is going to allow him to die peacefully. The Judeans will bury him in the same place where people buried his ancestors.

Yahweh is still going to cause something terrible to happen to Jerusalem and the people who live in it. But Josiah will not be alive to see that." The officials returned to King Josiah and reported what Huldah had told them.

23 King Josiah then sent messengers to summon all the elders of Jerusalem and of the other places in the kingdom of Judah. 2 Those elders, along with many ordinary people from Judah and Jerusalem, gathered in the temple courtyard with the king. Many priests and prophets also came. A great crowd representing all the kinds of people in the city was there. While they all listened, the king read to them from the scroll that had been in the temple. He all of the laws that Yahweh had given the Israelites when he made his solemn agreement with them. 3 Then the king stood next to a pillar *on the temple porch* and he made a solemn agreement with Yahweh that he would live as Yahweh wanted him to live. He promised to obey all of Yahweh's laws sincerely and devotedly. In that way, the solemn agreement that the scroll from the temple described became the law of Israel once again. The Judean people who had gathered at the temple courtyard promised to obey that solemn agreement.

4 Then the king gave a command to the high priest Hilkiah, the other leading priests, and the priests who supervised the courtyard entrance. He told them to remove from the temple all the objects that people had been using to worship Baal, Asherah, and the sun, moon, and stars. They took those outside the city to the Kidron Valley and burned them completely there. Then they took all the ashes to the city of Bethel. 5 Previous kings of Judah had appointed many pagan priests to burn incense at hilltop shrines near many cities in Judah and in the area around Jerusalem. Those priests had been offering sacrifices to Baal and to the sun, moon, and stars. King Josiah stopped them from doing those things. 6 Josiah ordered his servants to remove the pole for the worship of the goddess Asherah that was inside the temple building. He told them to take it outside Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley and burn it. He ordered them to pound the ashes to powder and scatter the powder in a graveyard for ordinary people that was in that area. 7 There were male prostitutes living in small houses near the temple. In those houses, women also wove articles that people used in the worship of Asherah. Josiah tore down those houses *and ended the activities that took place in them*. 8 Josiah also brought to Jerusalem all the priests who had been burning incense at hilltop shrines near other cities in Judah. He ordered his servants to demolish all of those hilltop shrines, everywhere in his kingdom. There were similar shrines in Jerusalem near the gate of Joshua, the governor of Jerusalem. That gate was to the left of the main city gate. Josiah ordered his servants to destroy those shrines as well. 9 (Josiah did not allow the priests he had brought to Jerusalem from the hilltop shrines to offer sacrifices on the altar in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem. But he did allow them to eat the food that the priests received as their share of sacrifices that people brought.) 10 There was a place that people called Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom where people used to burn their children as sacrifices to the false god Molech. Josiah had his servants destroy that place *so that no one would do that anymore*. 11 Previous kings of Judah had dedicated horses to pull chariots in processions in honor of the sun. There were stables for those horses near the entrance to the temple. A royal official whose name was Nathan Melech was responsible for the horses, and he lived in an apartment near the stables. King Josiah had his servants take the horses away from the temple and destroy the chariots by burning them. 12 Previous kings of Judah had built altars *for worshiping the sun, moon, and stars* on the palace roof. They were near the room that King Ahaz had made for himself. King Manasseh had also built altars in the two courtyards in the temple area. Josiah commanded his servants to destroy all those altars. He told them to take the debris from the altars away quickly and throw it down into the Kidron Valley. 13 King Solomon had built shrines east of Jerusalem, on the south side of the Mount of Destruction, for the disgusting gods that other people groups worshiped. He built a shrine for Ashtoreth, whom the Sidonians worshiped. He built one for Chemosh, whom the Moabites worshiped. And he built one for Milcom, whom the Ammonites worshiped. Josiah commanded his servants to ruin those shrines. 14 He also had them smash the stone pillars that represented Baal. He had them cut down *and burn* the poles that people had set up for worshiping the goddess Asherah. And he had them scatter human bones on the ground there *to make those places ritually unclean*.

15 Jeroboam son of Nebat had made an altar and a shrine at Bethel. He had influenced the Israelites to sin *by worshiping idols* when he did that. Josiah had his servants tear down the altar and the shrine, and he had them burn the shrine and crush what remained into dust. He also had them burn the pole that people had been using to worship Asherah. 16 Then Josiah looked around and saw some tombs on a nearby hill. He commanded his servants to take bones out of those tombs and burn them on the altar. This made the altar ritually unclean. Josiah did exactly what Yahweh had told a prophet *many years before* to say would happen. 17 Then Josiah *saw a tomb and* asked, "Whose tomb is that?" The people of Bethel replied, "It is the tomb of the prophet who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have just done to this altar." 18 Josiah replied, "Leave the bones of that prophet in his tomb." So the people did not remove his bones or the bones of the old prophet who had lived in that area *and who had deceived the other prophet so that he died*. 19 Josiah also ordered his servants to destroy all the hilltop shrines that were near cities in what had been the kingdom of Israel. The kings of Israel had built those shrines and made Yahweh very angry. Josiah had his servants tear down those shrines *and burn them and crush the remains and then scatter human bones on the sites*, just as he had done to the shrine at Bethel. 20 Josiah also ordered his servants to kill all the priests of those hilltop shrines right on the altars *where they had offered sacrifices to false gods*. Then he had them burn human bones on those altars *so that no one could use them for worship again*. After that, Josiah went back to Jerusalem.

21 Then the king commanded the people, "Celebrate the Passover festival to honor Yahweh your God. That is what the Law of Moses says to do *every year*." 22 During all the years when the judges ruled Israel, and during all the years when kings reigned in Israel and Judah, the Israelites had not celebrated Passover like that. 23 But now, after Josiah had been ruling for almost 18 years, the people of Jerusalem celebrated this Passover festival to honor Yahweh.

24 Furthermore, Josiah made the people who lived in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah stop doing detestable things. He forbade people to dig pits to try to contact people who had died or to try to talk to spirits that they thought could tell them secret things. He made the people throw away their household idols. He destroyed all the other kinds

of idols. Hilkiah the priest had found a scroll in the temple that recorded the law of Moses. Josiah did all those things so that what the scroll recorded would become the law of Israel once again. 25 Josiah sincerely, devotedly, and powerfully led the Judeans to worship Yahweh once again. He obeyed all the laws of Moses. No previous king was as devoted to Yahweh as he was, and no later king was that devoted either.

26 Even so, King Manasseh had done many things that had made Yahweh extremely angry with the people of Judah, and he continued to be very angry. 27 He had said, "I will allow an enemy to take the people of Judah away to a foreign country, just as an enemy took the people of Israel away. And I will reject Jerusalem, the city that I chose to be the place for the temple in which I said people would worship me."

28 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Josiah did. 29 While Josiah was the king of Judah, Pharaoh Neco of Egypt led his army north to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah led his army to fight the army of Egypt. The two armies fought at the city of Megiddo, and Josiah died in the battle there. 30 His soldiers put his body in a chariot and transported it back to Jerusalem. There the Judeans buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of Judah chose Josiah's son Jehoahaz to be their next king. They poured olive oil on his head to show that they were appointing him as their king.

31 Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became the king of Judah, but he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months. His mother was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah. She was from the city of Libnah. 32 Jehoahaz did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as many of his ancestors had done. 33 At the city of Riblah in the district of Hamath, Pharaoh Neco made Jehoahaz his prisoner so that he would no longer rule in Jerusalem. Neco then forced the people of Judah to pay to him a tribute of about 3.3 metric tons of silver and 33 kilograms of gold. 34 Pharaoh Neco appointed another son of Josiah, Eliakim, to be the next king of Judah instead. He changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away to Egypt, and later Jehoahaz died there. 35 In order to pay Neco the silver and gold that he had demanded, Jehoiakim collected a tax from the people of Judah. He collected more from the rich people and less from the poor people. After he had collected the silver and gold from them, he paid it to Neco.

36 Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for 11 years. His mother was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah. She was from the city of Rumah. 37 He did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as many of his ancestors had done.

24 While Jehoiakim was ruling Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his army to invade Judah. *They defeated the Judean army, and as a result, Jehoiakim became his subject king*. But after three years, Jehoiakim rebelled *and depended on Egypt again*. 2 Then Yahweh allowed Chaldean *that is, Babylonian*, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders to come into the land of Judah and steal the people's crops and valuable possessions. Yahweh had said through his prophets that he would punish the Judeans, and that is just what happened. 3 These things happened to the people of Judah because Yahweh had decreed that they would. He had decided to allow an enemy to take the people of Judah away to a foreign country because of the many sins that King Manasseh had committed. 4 Manasseh had also had his soldiers kill very many innocent people throughout the city of Jerusalem. Yahweh would not forgive that. 5 The book in which the kings of Judah recorded what happened during their reigns describes further things that Jehoiakim did. 6 When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became the next king. 7 The king of Babylon led his soldiers to conquer the whole area that the Egyptians had formerly controlled, from the brook at the boundary of Egypt to the Euphrates River. After that, the king of Egypt did not lead his soldiers anywhere outside of his country.

8 Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for only three months. His mother was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan. She was from the city of Jerusalem. 9 Jehoiachin did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as his father had done.

10 While Jehoiachin was the king, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ordered his commanders to lead their soldiers to attack Jerusalem. They surrounded the city *and tried to conquer it*. 11 While they were still doing that, Nebuchadnezzar himself came to the city *with even more of his soldiers*. 12 Then King Jehoiachin and his mother, advisors, military officers, and palace officials all surrendered to King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar had been king for eight years when he captured Jehoiachin. 13 Just as Yahweh had said would happen, Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers seized everything that was in the storerooms of Yahweh's temple and the king's palace. They also stripped off all the gold with which King Solomon's workers had overlaid surfaces and furniture in the temple. 14 They forced 10,000 people to leave Jerusalem and go to Babylon. These people included the military officers and the wealthy Judeans. They also included the skilled workers and the metalworkers. The Babylonians left only the poorest people in Judah. 15 They took King Jehoiachin away to Babylon. They also took the queen mother, Jehoiachin's wives, his royal officials, and many other prominent Judeans. They made them all leave Jerusalem and go to Babylon. 16 In total, they took to Babylon 7,000 wealthy people, 1,000 skilled workers and metalworkers*, and 2,000 royal and noble people*. In that way, Nebuchadnezzar removed from Judah everyone who could have made a rebellion against him. 17 Then Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah to be the king of Judah instead of him. He changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah. She was from the city of Libnah. 19 Zedekiah did many things that Yahweh had told the Israelites were evil, just as *his older brother* Jehoiakim had done. 20 Yahweh made these things happen to the people who lived in Jerusalem and other parts of Judah because he was very angry with them. He finally allowed the Babylonians to force them to leave their country. That happened when Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

25 *Because Zedekiah had rebelled,* King Nebuchadnezzar led his whole army to attack Jerusalem. They arrived there after Zedekiah had been ruling for nine years, on the tenth day of the tenth month of that year. They surrounded the city and built earthen ramps against its walls to help them attack it. 2 The Babylonians kept attacking the city *for the next two years,* until Zedekiah had been ruling for eleven

years. 3 Because the Babylonians had surrounded the city,
the people could not bring in any food. By the ninth day of
the *fourth month* of that year, they had no food left. 4 Then
the Chaldean soldiers *that is, the Babylonian soldiers* broke
through the city wall and entered the city. *King Zedekiah
and* the Judean soldiers tried to escape at night *when the
Chaldeans would not see them*. They used the gate near the
king's garden to go through the inner and outer walls of
the city. Zedekiah *and the soldiers* tried to escape through
the Jordan River valley. But the Chaldeans had surrounded
the city*, and some of their soldiers saw where they went*. 5 So
some Chaldean soldiers chased after King Zedekiah. They
caught up to him in the plains around the city of Jericho.
His soldiers ran away *instead of fighting to defend him*. 6 So
the Babylonian soldiers were able to capture King Zedekiah.
They brought him to Nebuchadnezzar, who was in the city of
Riblah. Nebuchadnezzar declared that Zedekiah was guilty
of rebelling against him. 7 Then he forced Zedekiah to watch
as his soldiers killed all of his sons. Then the soldiers gouged
out Zedekiah's eyes. They put bronze chains on his hands
and feet and brought him as a prisoner to the city of Babylon.

8 Nebuzaradan was one of King Nebuchadnezzar's officials.
He commanded the royal bodyguards. He arrived in Jerusalem
on the seventh day of the fifth month of that year. That
was after Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for 19 years.
9 He ordered his soldiers to burn down Yahweh's temple, the
king's palace, and all the important buildings in Jerusalem.
10 Then the Chaldean soldiers who had come to Jerusalem
with Nebuzaradan tore down the walls all around Jerusalem.
11 After that, he and his soldiers took to Babylon the people
who were still alive in Jerusalem. They also took other
people who lived in the region of Judah. Some Judeans had
previously surrendered to the Babylonian army, and they
took them away too. 12 But Nebuzaradan allowed some of
the very poor people to stay in Judah to take care of the
vineyards and to plant crops in the fields.

13 The Chaldean soldiers broke into pieces the bronze
pillars, the bronze carts, and the giant water basin that
people called the sea, all of which were in the temple
courtyard, and they took all the bronze to Babylon. 14 They
also took the pots, shovels, wick snuffers, incense dishes,
and other bronze items that the priests used for their work
in the temple. 15 The soldiers also took away the pans for
carrying hot coals, the small bowls, and all the other items
that were pure gold or pure silver. 16 There was too much
bronze for the Babylonians to weigh in the two pillars, the
carts, and the giant water basin that people called the sea.
King Solomon had commanded his workers to make those
things for Yahweh's temple. 17 Each of the pillars was eight
and one quarter meters tall. The bronze top of each pillar was
one and one third meters tall. Solomon's master craftsman
had decorated the tops with bronze strands that he had
formed into the shape of nets. He had also made bronze
decorations in the shape of pomegranates for the pillar tops.

18 Nebuzaradan took some prisoners. These included the
high priest Seraiah, Zephaniah, who was another leading
priest, and the three priests who had supervised the courtyard
entrance. 19 The prisoners also included the royal official
responsible for the army, five of the king's advisors who had
not fled, the commander who recorded the names of Judean
men as they came to serve as soldiers, and 60 men who were
serving as soldiers and were still in the city. 20 Nebuzaradan
took them all as prisoners to the king of Babylon at the
city of Riblah. 21 There at the city of Riblah, in the province
of Hamath, the king of Babylon had his soldiers kill all of
the prisoners. That is what happened when the Babylonians
forcefully took the people of Judah away from their land.

22 King Nebuchadnezzar allowed some people to continue
living in Judah. He appointed Gedaliah to be their governor.
Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam and the grandson of
Shaphan. 23 *There were* some Judean army commanders and
their soldiers *whom the Babylonians had not captured. When
they* found out that Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Gedaliah
as the governor of Judah, the commanders and soldiers went
to meet with him at the city of Mizpah. These commanders
were Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah,
Seraiah son of Tanhumeth from the city of Netophah, and
Jaazaniah, the son of a man from the region of Maacah.
24 Gedaliah solemnly promised them that they could remain
in Judah without being afraid of the Chaldean soldiers. He
told them that if they obeyed the king of Babylon, they could
live peacefully in the land. 25 But in the seventh month of that
year, Ishmael son of Nethaniah went to Mizpah with ten of
his soldiers. Ishmael was a descendant of King David through
his grandfather Elishama. Ishmael and his men assassinated
Gedaliah. They also assassinated the Judeans who were
serving in his government and the Chaldean officials who
were there. 26 This made the Judeans who were still living
in the land very afraid of what the Chaldeans would do to
them. So a large number of them fled to Egypt. The army
commanders also fled there.

27 After the Babylonians took King Jehoiachin of Judah to
Babylon, 37 years went by. Then Nebuchadnezzar's son Evil
Merodach became the king of Babylon. On the twenty-seventh
day of the twelfth month of his first year as king, he released
Jehoiachin from prison. 28 He reassured Jehoiachin that he
would treat him well, and he gave him a position of greater
honor than the other *captive* kings whom the Babylonians
had *conquered and* brought to their royal court. 29 He gave
Jehoiachin new clothes to replace the clothes that he had
been wearing in prison, and he allowed Jehoiachin to eat
meals with him every day for the rest of his life. 30 The king
of Babylon also gave Jehoiachin money to buy the things he
needed. He gave him a regular amount that was sufficient for
his needs. The king continued to do for as long as Jehoiachin
lived.